

Friday July 3 1998

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Argentina US\$ 25
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Mexico M 20
Morocco M 20
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Oman O 100
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Panama P 20
Paraguay P 20
Peru S 20
Poland Z 20
Portugal E 20
Puerto Rico P 20
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Saudi Arabia S 20
Senegal S 20
Sierra Leone L 20
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Comment, page 14

ROH sacks head of education on first day

Don Gislater
Arts Correspondent

THE Royal Opera House, condemned this week by Sir Richard Eyre for its "arrogance", has summarily dismissed its head of opera education on her first day in the job.

The dismissal comes in the wake of changes introduced by the ROH last month to bring its education activities under the auspices of its public relations department. The Royal Opera now has an education staff.

Sir Richard, whose report

was received with equanimity by the ROH, condemned the latest evidence of high-handedness. "It makes me blind with anger," he said. "This confirms my worst fears of bad faith and it's in a tragically time-honoured tradition of Opera House own goals. It confirms my view, which I spell out in the report, that unless there is a total change of mindset they can't survive. It appears that they have not taken on board the report. Unless they get the message soon, they will just sink into the sea."

In his report Sir Richard said: "It is essential that

education work is recognised as integral to the objectives of the organisation, rather than an optional add-on, or an element of marketing strategy."

His views were underlined by Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, in a letter to the ROH chairman, Sir Colin Southgate, following publication of the report.

Janet Robertson, an experienced arts education officer, was recruited in March and, after working occasional days for the ROH, began her full-time appointment on June 15.

But when she arrived for

her first day of work she was presented with a letter from Mike Morris, the head of personnel, which told her: "I regret to inform you that the ROH has decided not to confirm your appointment."

Ms Robertson was then escorted from the building.

Yesterday Felham Allen, the chief executive, said: "She was not dismissed. It was simply to say thank you but don't come."

"They didn't like me," said Ms Robertson yesterday. "They could easily have got rid of me without this disaster, but they have shot themselves in the foot. I've been treated in a most

shabby manner. It is unthinkable and unpardonable that a national flagship company can sideline its education operation over to public relations. It is almost as if they feel they can do anything and nobody can touch them, but 37 per cent of their budget comes from public funds."

Education was a key part of the ROH's bid for £78.5 million of National Lottery money towards its £213 million redevelopment. Pauline Tumbler, head of education at the Arts Council and until the end of last year head of education at the Royal Opera, said: "The whole backbone of granting

National Lottery funding is that education and training work should be key."

But Ms Robertson was given a different impression of the priorities at the Opera House in the run-up to taking her post.

"On June 1 I met Mr Allen who told me the commitment to education was 'nothing more than lip service'," she said.

A further meeting took place on June 4 with public relations director Judy Graham. Ms Robertson said: "I was abusively accused of 'intense negativity' and of bringing a 'bad attitude' to the job, because I had raised legitimate con-

cerns about changes that had been made after my appointment."

Last night Mr Allen did not deny that he had told Ms Robertson at their meeting that the education operation was "lip service."

"There is a risk that we end up playing with words," he said. "I'm conscious that there is a political correctness in some organisations."

"It is perhaps a little difficult that education should be absolutely central in all aspects when we have problems in other areas such as funding. We are not funded from the education budget."



Janet Robertson: 'treated in a most shabby manner'

Blueprint to end CSA chaos

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

ABSENT fathers will be forced to pay up to 25 per cent of their take-home pay to child maintenance under a comprehensive shake-up of the much-criticised Child Support Agency to be announced on Monday.

Most parents — whether absent or looking after children — will be better off under the new scheme, the Government says. The changes will apply to all cases already on the CSA's books, as well as new ones. The number of families covered is expected to reach 1.1 million by 2001.

Mothers on benefits will be allowed to keep up to £10 of the maintenance a week in an attempt to encourage them to co-operate with the CSA. At present any money paid in maintenance is deducted from benefits, a measure which has been regarded as a serious flaw.

The new £10 bonus, plus a simple formula for maintenance, will mean that about three-quarters of both absent parents and parents looking after children will financially benefit, according to the Government.

Social Security Secretary Harriet Harman is due to announce the reforms to MPs on Monday, although negotiations were continuing last night on the precise formula for maintenance payments.

One late draft of the paper set down a sliding scale under which absent parents would pay 15 per cent of their take-home pay in maintenance for one child, 20 per cent for two and 25 per cent for three and above. But an alternative being promoted by Downing Street would see absent parents paying 12 per cent for a first child, with an addi-



tional 5 per cent for a second and for a third or more, setting a ceiling at 22 per cent of net income.

The formula means that, for the first time, parents will pay on a sliding scale according to the number of children, rather than the present flat rate demanded.

Maeve Sherlock, director of the National Council for One Parent Families, welcomed the principle of a simplified formula, but urged that maintenance contributions be set at a level ensuring adequate care for children.

However, the National Association for Child Support Action, which represents mainly absent parents but also some parents with care, had reservations. Chairman Andy Farquarson said: "The simpler the formula, the blunter the instrument. A simple formula will dispense rough justice, and that is no justice for children."

The green paper will build in transitional arrangements to ease the change for parents who either receive less or pay more under the new formula.

The overhaul of the CSA, created under legislation backed by Labour as well as

the Tories, is intended to bring to an end seven years of controversy and bitterness over the agency.

A report published this week by the parliamentary ombudsman condemned the CSA for repeating basic errors and causing distress and hardship through inadequate attempts to win maintenance for families by pursuing absent parents.

Ministers have grown increasingly concerned that 90 per cent of agency staff time is taken up in assessing claims under the current highly complex formula, with only 10 per cent devoted to chasing up payments. Pressure for reform has also mounted amid rumours that 70 per cent of parents with care of children are now refusing to co-operate with the CSA.

While many mothers who refuse claim they fear violence from the absent partner, ministers suspect that a significant proportion of those opting not to co-operate with the agency have in fact set up informal maintenance arrangements, aware that formalising the process will simply lead to a cut in benefits.

A national advertising campaign will be launched to promote the new system, focusing on warnings to so-called "deadbeat dads" that there will be no escape from maintenance payment.

One cloud over the introduction of the reforms is the likely time needed before the changes reach the statute book. One source last night suggested legislation could take two years to go through, but predicted that Mr. Blair's government would push through the changes as a matter of priority.

The green paper will build in transitional arrangements to ease the change for parents who either receive less or pay more under the new formula.

The overhaul of the CSA, created under legislation backed by Labour as well as



Sion Jenkins arriving at court yesterday. The judge called him a considerable danger to the public

NIGEL BOWLES

Life for Billie-Jo's foster father

Lucie Harding

THE foster father of Billie-Jo Jenkins was jailed for life last night after being convicted of her "horrendous" murder with an 18-inch tent peg, on what the trial judge described as compelling evidence.

Sion Jenkins, aged 40, a deputy headmaster, was found guilty of the 13-year-old's savage killing at the end of a 26-day trial. There were shouts of "you monster" and "bastard" from the schoolgirl's natural family seated in the public gallery. Two female jurors burst into tears.

Billie-Jo's relatives buried abuse and spat.

The schoolgirl's natural

mother, Deborah Jenkins, sobbed quietly while her father Bill jumped to his feet and punched the air.

The judge, Mr Justice Gage, told Jenkins, of Hastings: "It was a furious attack, the motive for which only you now know. That girl was in your care as a foster child. You yourself were a deputy headmaster at the time, a man in a position of trust and authority in respect of children."

"These bare facts are sufficient to show what a horrendous crime this was... you are a very considerable danger to the public."

Last night Jenkins's 38-year-old wife Lois described for the first time how she discovered Billie-Jo had been bludgeoned to death in her

home. "Sixteen months ago I returned, with two of my children, from a quiet Saturday afternoon walk on the beach, to a tragedy more horrific than any person ever expects to encounter in a lifetime."

"The loss of Billie, especially in such awful circumstances has been almost too much to bear."

"It is a terrible thing to realise that the man with whom you have lived for 14 years, the father of your children, is capable of murdering your child. There is no reason, no explanation, for such a pointless waste of a young life."

Det Supt Jeremy Paine of Sussex police, who led the 16-month investigation, yesterday described Billie-Jo's mur-

der as a "brutal act carried out in a moment of incomprehensible rage and violence."

Speaking outside the court Bill Jenkins, Billie-Jo's natural father, said he "felt nothing" towards the man who had murdered her. "I have been living in a daze for the last 16 months. The daze has gone now. I have no feelings."

Sussex police revealed fresh details of how Jenkins had almost completely invented his CV to become deputy headmaster of a local boys' comprehensive school in Hastings. He falsely claimed to have a degree from Kent University, a PGCE in Education and an MSc in Education Management.

Det Supt Jeremy Paine of Sussex police, who led the 16-month investigation, yesterday described Billie-Jo's mur-

Cabinet battle over secrecy bill

David Hencke, Westminster Correspondent

THE Lord Chancellor, Derry Irvine, and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, David Clark, are fighting a rearguard action to save the Government's flagship Freedom of Information Bill from being mutilated by mandarins and wrecked by hostile ministers for the second year running.

A Cabinet committee held on Wednesday night was described as a "bloody battlefield" by a Whitehall source after as many as 17 ministers clashed over moves to weaken and pre-empt the bill becoming law next year.

Its opponents include Jack Straw, the Home Secretary; Lord Richard, leader of the Lords; Peter Mandelson, the minister without portfolio; Lady Symonds, junior minister at the Foreign Office; John Reid, the armed forces minister; and John Speller, junior defence minister.

At Wednesday's meeting Lord Irvine managed to force through a commitment to produce a draft bill for scrutiny by Parliament in September. But the bill faces a further hurdle at the end of July, when cabinet ministers meet to decide which legislation will go forward in the Queen's Speech next November.

This could be after Tony Blair's Cabinet reshuffle — which is expected to see David Clark replaced by Mr Mandelson, who wants to delay legislation another year.

Lord Irvine's victory on Wednesday was only after he and Mr Clark were forced by the ministers present to amend the White Paper to weaken the powers of the proposed information commissioner to order Government departments to release papers to the public and press. Fifteen ministers — some of Cabinet rank — wanted to remove the power of the commissioner to order departments to release information.

As a result Lord Irvine and Mr Clark had to create a new

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Sketch

Supertanker of state is sinking



Simon Hoggart

CHANNEL surfing at the Houses of Parliament... Questions. Cunningham is admitting that farm incomes fell by an astonishing 47 per cent in 1997.

But it isn't his fault. Nothing is ever the fault of any minister in this government. Alan Williams (Lab, Carmarthen E) reminds us of what Frank Dobson had said on Tuesday: "The supertanker has turned round!" This phrase is meant to imply that Tory incompetence was so great that it created its own forward momentum, stopped only by the Herculean efforts of the recovery crew.

The message is now on every page. Forget the old formula ("We need to lecture from the party which..."). Now, like modern Madam Butterflies, we are all waiting for the supertanker to show up on the blue horizon. (Or even, as with inflation, unemployment and mortgages, to turn round smartly and sail off in the wrong direction.)

Buseep! I flip over to the Lords where Baroness Knight of Collingtree — formerly known, to my family anyway, when we lived next door to one of her committee rooms, as Dame Jill "My husband always says 'Never despise the humble sausage'." Knight — is asking whether the Government would prevent couples who earned a total £200,000 or more from receiving child benefit.

Might this be a partisan jibe at the nation's favourite family? It might. "The wife could be a top barrister, and the husband perhaps a cabinet minister. Or it could be the other way round," she adds sweetly. Lord Haskel, a government minister, replies with equal courtesy that the Chancellor agreed with her. It must be right for high earners to be taxed on their benefit. For the Blair, Mr Brown next door must be the equivalent of the neighbour from hell, playing rock music all night, and getting his pit bulls to do their mess in your garden.

Review

Charm gets lost in the inflation

Michael Billington

Whistle Down The Wind

REMEMBER the movie? It was a small, charming, black-and-white affair about a group of Yorkshire children who mistook a fugitive criminal for Jesus Christ.

Now, it has been blown up by Andrew Lloyd Webber into a big, noisy musical melodrama set in Louisiana — and the result, I fear, is so much puff and wind.

The success of the film had much to do with the contrast between religious credulity and Yorkshire pragmatism: we all recall the heroine's hard-headed younger brother, who, on viewing Alan Bates as the shaggy runaway, cried: "He ain't Jesus — he's just a feller."

That line actually survives in this transposition of the story by Patricia Knop, Gale Edwards and Lloyd Webber, but it goes almost unnoticed in the general atmosphere of woolly religiosity.

This, in fact, is the first mistake. By setting the action in the American Bible Belt in 1969, where you can almost hear tubs being thumped, the writers have tried to give the show a certain emotional logic. In fact, they have destroyed its whimsical charm. If everyone in this thick town is filled with evangelical fervour, then there is nothing exceptional about the naïve faith of Swallow, the adolescent heroine.

The creators' answer to that is to suggest that the town's religious zeal conceals diabolical instincts; but the result is melodramatic rather than Manichean. And the first act ends with Swallow hymning the putative Jesus on the stage's lower level while, up above, the redneck sheriff and the townsfolk are talking us: "You gotta wrestle with the devil." This is not so much dramatic counterpoint as spiritual sensationalism.

Everything about the show seems overblown. Lloyd Webber's score is a genuine melodic gift, at its best in Aspects of Love and the revised Jeeves, to musical rhetoric. Jim Steinman's lyrics, particularly those given to The Man, have a similar windiness.

Searching for something to praise, I would commend the design by Peter J. Davison, which is dominated by a floor surface that rises and falls, admitting us to barn, freeway or train-tunnel. Lottie Mayor endows Swallow with the right innocence and Marcus Lovett plays The Man with an impish fury.

But, in narrative terms, the show makes little sense. It's rather as if Sweeney Todd met Annie, and the consequence was a musical of quite breathtaking pointlessness.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

Paris Ritz could face legal action as Rees-Jones asks police to look at role played by staff in accident

Diana bodyguard crash plea

Jon Henley in Paris

TREVOR Rees-Jones, the sole survivor of the crash that killed Diana, Princess of Wales, has asked French police to widen their inquiry into the role played in the accident by staff at the Ritz, the Paris hotel owned by his former employer, Mohamed Al Fayed.

The formal request, which Mr Rees-Jones is entitled to make as a civil plaintiff in the case, seems to signal a definitive break between the former bodyguard and Mr Al Fayed, whose son Dodi was also killed in the August 31 crash.

and could lead to a claim for criminal or civil liability against the hotel.

Mr Rees-Jones, aged 29, resigned from his job with the multi-millionaire Harrods owner in April, but has until now said nothing to contradict his former employer's claim that the tragedy was caused by the behaviour of pursuing photographers rather than by the driving of Henri Paul, the Ritz deputy security chief who was drunk at the time.

Mr Rees-Jones's French lawyer, Christian Curti, said yesterday that he had filed a formal request with the investigating magistrate in charge of the case, Hervé Stephan,

asking him to widen the probe of Ritz staff to shed more light on discrepancies in the evidence gathered. "We have filed a request for additional information," Mr Curti said. "My client has always been represented by his own legal team and has never shared the same point of view as the Ritz."

Mr Curti refused to say whether Mr Rees-Jones, who underwent 10 hours of reconstructive surgery after the crash in the Pont de l'Alma underpass, was preparing legal action against the Al Fayed family, saying the request "does not necessarily have legal implications".

Post-mortem tests, initially

contested by the Al Fayed family, established that Paul was three times over the drink-driving limit and on a cocktail of prescription drugs, including Prozac, when he took the wheel.

It is less certain whether the hotel's management knew their employee might have had a chronic alcohol problem, nor whether they were aware that he had been drinking at the hotel bar — as some staff have told investigators.

If, following the investigation, a court finds that to be the case, the Ritz could be liable for huge damages, either criminally or in any civil suit filed by the victims' families. Many French legal experts

consider action against the Ritz to be inevitable.

Hotel executives have denied Paul had been drinking. But police are known to have interviewed a Ritz barman who said management knew Paul had a drink problem, but pressured staff not to divulge this to investigators. Another staff member has told police Paul was staggering as he left the hotel.

The Ritz could also be held liable for the fact that Paul did not have the special chauffeur's licence needed to drive the Mercedes S280.

After the crash Mr Al Fayed paid Mr Rees-Jones's medical bills. Dodi was flown back to England by private helicopter and gave him a job at Harrods. He also allegedly arranged newspaper interviews in which the former bodyguard said both he and the driver had been blinded by photographers' flashlights and that there was nothing in Paul's manner to suggest he had been drinking.

French judicial sources have said Mr Al Fayed has backed away from his much criticised contention that the crash stemmed from a conspiracy, and now thinks the photographers are to blame.

The investigation, which will not end before October, is expected to find that Paul's drunken condition and excessive speed caused the crash.

Blair fights for Orange march deal

John Mullin

Ireland Correspondent

TONY BLAIR flew to Belfast last night on an 11th hour mission to save Northern Ireland from plunging back into sectarian strife ahead of the looming crisis of Sunday's Orange march at Drumcree.

Mr Blair's first visit before heading to meetings at Stormont was to one of 10 Catholic churches devastated by fire in co-ordinated attacks. He dismissed the arsonists as people of the past, and said that they represented no one.

Mr Blair, who was staying overnight, was locked in talks with David Trimble, newly-elected first minister, and Seamus Mallon, his deputy. Later the Prime Minister summoned Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin president, to Stormont and encouraged him to use his influence to allow a token march along the nationalist Garvaghy Road section of the Orangemen's traditional route.

Mr Blair, outside the ruins of the 200-year-old St James's Church in Aldergrove, said: "I'm not here to negotiate over Drumcree. But I can ask people to listen to the voice of reason. The Parades Commission's ruling stands, but as its chairman said, the best thing that could possibly happen is that people come together and agree."

Senior Orangemen, including Denis Watson, Grand Master of Armagh, and William Bingham, who met Mr Blair at Downing Street on Monday, were involved in the talks. Archbishop Robin Eames, Church of Ireland Primate, was also there.

The summit was at Castle Buildings, temporary home to Northern Ireland's new assembly.

The Parades Commission, set up this year to rule on contentious marches, on Monday banned the Orangemen from their traditional route along the nationalist Garvaghy Road.



John Burns, parish priest of St John's Church in Cranlin, shows Tony Blair the ruins of the building after last night's arson attack by loyalists

Road as they returned to Portadown in Co Armagh after the Drumcree church service. The march has sparked fearsome violence for the past three years.

Northern Ireland was brought to a halt in 1996, the last occasion the Orange Order was rerouted. Roadblocks cut off the main airport and ferry terminals.

The Orangemen stayed at the church for five days before Sir Hugh Amessley, then RUC chief constable, decided

to allow them through for fear of further loss of life. Loyalists killed Michael McGoldrick, aged 31, a taxi-driver from Lurgan, during the stand-off.

The RUC said yesterday it believed that the same group, the Loyalist Volunteer Force, was behind the arson attacks on churches, three of which were completely destroyed.

The LVF, led by Billy Wright until his murder at the Maze Prison last December, denied it was responsible.

But sources in Portadown suggest the organisation is planning to firebomb Catholic businesses if the march is blocked.

The aim was to try to settle on a reduced march along the road. But Brendan MacLennan, representative of the Garvaghy Road residents, was angry that Orange leaders had turned down his offer of a meeting. "We are completely out of touch. There are a lot of machinations going on, but the people that matter are

being left out of the equation," he said. "We can only assume that the Orange Order and Unionist leadership are being told that the rule of law is going to be upheld and the Parades Commission decision cannot be overturned. We would hope that is the case."

President Clinton appealed for restraint and Bertie Ahern, Irish premier, said his government was involved and there were a number of proposed solutions.

Cabinet battle over bill

continued from page 1

national appeals tribunal to arbitrate between the commissioner and Whitehall when they clash over the release of important documents in the tribunal.

Searching for something to praise, I would commend the design by Peter J. Davison, which is dominated by a floor surface that rises and falls, admitting us to barn, freeway or train-tunnel. Lottie Mayor endows Swallow with the right innocence and Marcus Lovett plays The Man with an impish fury.

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handle requests from the press and public are already in place to deal with inquiries under the present Code of Access to Information.

Alastair Darling, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who attended the meeting, is said to have backed the Lord Chancellor by saying cost should not be a problem.

Whitehall sources say attempts to delay the bill began six weeks ago when Mr Mandelson called for a further delay, arguing that it had not been properly thought out.

Jack Straw, who has already won concessions to exclude material about police operations, has been a regular attendee at the committee, urging that the bill be delayed. He is said to be against the bill on principle.

Defence ministers, Mr Reid and Mr Speller, have consistently opposed the bill on the grounds that it could threaten national security or be too costly.

Lady Symons, the Foreign Office minister who used to be general secretary of the senior civil service union, the First Division Association, is known to be worried about releasing policy advice given by mandarins to the press.

Her position has been strengthened by the row her boss, Robin Cook, has had with the Commons over releasing Foreign Office telegrams to MPs investigating the Sandline affair.

Mr Clark last night declined to comment about the leak of information on the progress of the bill.

HIV infection 'not murder'

Jon Henley in Paris

THE French supreme court ruled yesterday that knowingly transmitting the AIDS virus was not the same as murder, making it highly unlikely that three former politicians will ever be tried for the "infected blood" scandal in which some 400 people died after receiving blood infected with HIV.

The court ruled that a man who passed on the virus to a woman while aware that he was HIV-positive could not be tried for poisoning, which under French law is equivalent to wilful murder and carries a penalty of 30 years' jail.

"Knowledge of the lethal

potential of the substance administered alone is not enough proof of the intent to kill," the court said in its ruling, which drew an immediate angry response from haemophiliacs and their relatives.

The pronouncement follows a supreme court prosecutor's reported recommendation earlier this month that charges of complicity in poisoning be dropped against a former Socialist prime minister, Laurent Fabius, and his health and social affairs ministers Edmond Hervé and Georges Duhal.

A special court judicial board is due to decide in two weeks' time whether the three former ministers should face trial for their

part in the 1985 scandal, in which some 1,350 haemophiliacs and hospital patients were infected by HIV-bearing blood products supplied by the national transfusion service.

Four senior health officials, including the directors of the transfusion service and the public health service, have already been sentenced to up to four years' jail for fraud in the affair, after being found guilty of knowingly allowing the use of potentially contaminated blood stocks. Another 38 people are under formal investigation.

Mr Fabius, who is now the speaker of the French National Assembly, and the two former ministers have denied all the charges.

Polly Toynbee reports on the disastrous impact of one of the Conservatives' legacies

Modest hopes for the calamitous CSA

A MAJOR advertising campaign alerting fathers to the new, simpler Child Support Agency formula will accompany the CSA changes. The Government wants all men to know exactly what they must pay if they father a child. Recent US research suggests a sudden drop in the birth rate among unmarried young women may be caused by the government's success in frightening young men with the financial consequences of reckless fathering.

However, there will be few triumphant pronouncements that the Government has found the answer to the calamitous Child Support Agency. The modest hope is that the new formula may work a bit better. It could hardly be worse, since recent

figures show only 13 per cent of cases taken on end with the CSA collecting the full sum from fathers.

The CSA's dismal record has meant the mothers who were initially keen to collect maintenance have given up hope. Now nearly 75 per cent of mothers refuse to co-operate, a 50 per cent increase in two years. "We know we are walking along a fault line," a member of the Government said, for bitter experience in many countries shows the extreme difficulty of making fathers pay. The state intervenes itself between warring ex-partners at its peril. The green paper has been delayed and is being re-written but no magic solution has been found.

The CSA is Labour's worst inheritance from the last go-

vernment. However, the Act setting up the agency was passed in 1991 with full Labour support. There was general agreement that the fathers were paying far too little and the old court system was letting most men off too lightly, with judges accepting fathers' under-declared income statements at face value.

But Conservative ministers setting up the CSA ignored strong advice, and all the evidence from other countries with similar agencies. Under pressure from Mrs Thatcher to recoup the soaring sums in social security paid to single mothers, they killed the goose that could have laid the golden egg. They refused to let mothers on income support keep any of the money reclaimed from fathers, giving

them no incentive to co-operate. Mothers faced the trouble of pursuing their children's fathers, causing renewed rows and sometimes violence, but got nothing in exchange.

The other serious error was making the legislation retrospective. By re-opening old cases long settled by the courts and imposing the new formula on them, fathers with second families were landed with unexpected new claims.

The CSA started slowly with only new divorcees and new unmarried fathers. It would have begun with a small load, instead of a vast backlog of every divorcee of the last 16 years.

A few outrageously unfair cases hit the headlines, where some fathers had already handed over homes or lump

sums in clean-break divorces. These cases acted as the rallying point for the biggest spontaneous public rebellion since the poll tax. Fathers who were simply refusing to pay hid behind those with genuine grievances in a general act of defiance.

From the start, it was the fathers who won the sympathy of mainly male MPs whose postbags they swamped, and also the support of mainly male newspapers.

The simplified formula will demand far less from fathers, hoping it will encourage them to pay something, if nothing like a realistic sum.

As all cases will be reviewed yet again, there is likely to be an outcry from some mothers who find their maintenance is reduced.

CASE ONE

SUE POWELL

THE Child Support Agency sent me a letter last November asking for further details of my daughter Lydia's father so they could pursue him for maintenance. At the time Lydia was in the middle of her mock GCSE exams and they contacted me as I was in receipt of income support. I was surprised when

the letter arrived, as I had not contacted the CSA, but when I refused to co-operate they penalised me by reducing my benefit.

My ex-husband and my daughter have a very good relationship and I couldn't see the point in spoiling this by involving the CSA — so they deducted £19.65 a week from my benefit, which meant I only had £40 a week to live on.

I feel as if I have been emotionally blackmailed by the CSA to reveal details

about her father. The last six months have been horrendous — we are living well below the poverty line — and Lydia could have been spared this hassle at such a crucial point in her education.

I wrote to the CSA informing them that they were causing distress to my daughter, but they refused to acknowledge this. It has caused us all a great deal of anguish — before the CSA became involved we were all on an even keel."

CASE TWO

WAYNE DRENNAN

I RETURNED home from my honeymoon with my second wife, Elaine, in August 1993 to find a letter from the Child Support Agency.

I wanted me to pay more for my daughter, who is nearly 12, although I had never begrudged paying £20 a

week maintenance as agreed. The first CSA assessment calculated that I needed to pay £94 a week, which was a huge chunk of my £220 a week salary as a forklift driver.

They also said that I owed £1,000 arrears. Because of this they recalculated my assessment by deducting £107 a week from my earnings.

I used to see my daughter all the time, and I could afford to buy her clothes and anything she needed — but the

CSA put a stop to all that. I don't see my daughter at all now. The last time I saw her in the street she actually ran away from me.

Although I appealed against the assessment and it has been reduced to £64 per week, it leaves me with very little to live on after the bills have been paid. I now have two young children with my second wife. We only have £30 a week to buy food for a family of four."

مكتبة الامير

Broken life of asylum seeker

Ill-treatment and abuse drove a Nigerian student to seek sanctuary in Britain only to fall under a regime that pushed him into a suicide attempt

Victoria Brittain reports



An anti-government protest outside the Nigerian high commission in London. 'I would be picked up and detained at the airport,' says Enahoro Esemuze. PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

TODAY is Enahoro Esemuze's birthday. He is waking up to it in a strip cell in Rochester prison with no clothes, no pillow, no possessions, just a heavy blanket which smells bad. Two days ago, already on suicide watch in the hospital wing, he tried to hang himself.

Enahoro is in this cold British punishment cell not because he has committed any crime, but because he is a young unknown student activist who sought refuge here after spells in jail, beatings and torture in Nigeria.

He survived those brutalising experiences with only physical scars, but it is Britain and Her Majesty's Home Office, aided by Group 4, that has almost broken him. It is Britain that brought him to wrap a strip of blanket around his throat early on Tuesday morning.

When he walked into the prison visiting area 36 hours later, in a maroon and blue faded tracksuit and with canvas tennis shoes slipping off his feet because he is not allowed lace, he was shaking like a leaf. He looked only at the floor, and was almost unable to speak.

Enahoro has already spent one birthday in British detention. The birthday before that, he said, he was in hiding in Nigeria. He spent his student years just surviving as one of the legion of young, idealistic, well-educated Nigerians in the democracy movement, fed up with the rampant corruption of successive military regimes and their hangers-on in the political elite.

In the democracy movement some are bought off, some give up from exhaustion and some just seek respite. Britain, they know, even under the Conservative government was in the forefront of international calls for "good governance" and "democracy" in Africa, and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, prides himself on his ethical foreign policy. Brit-

ain, for them, is the obvious place to look for help when the democracy struggle gets too rough. Until they get here.

Enahoro knows better now. "Rich Nigerians who come here with money they've embezzled, they are welcome," he said. "But an ordinary person like me is not in prison."

When Enahoro arrived at Heathrow in May 1997 he had arranged for distant relatives to meet him, but he never found them. He got confused at immigration, did not know he had to apply immediately for asylum and ended up in Campfield detention centre outside Oxford, which is run by Group 4.

His relatives from London visited weekly. He wrote home regularly, hiding from his family the treatment he and his friends were getting from the guards, who he said humiliated the black refugees with racist remarks, served food that was sometimes rotten and intimidated anyone who complained by having them abruptly moved to a prison or deported.

"One time they threw our letters in the bin and said: 'Let the black monkeys get them themselves.'"

But the everyday bleakness of Campfield turned to violence in August 1997. Enahoro and eight other West Africans were thrust into a nightmare. This was the catalyst that brought Enahoro and three of the others to repeated suicide attempts. One teenager is now in a mental hospital. More than half of them have been on medication for depression.

A medical report on Enahoro not only confirms all his stories in meticulous and horrifying detail of torture when he was in Nigeria, from the scars on so many parts of his body, but also warns of the risk of suicide. It states categorically that his psychological health would be made much worse by his being returned to Nigeria as the Home Office proposes. He has no history of depression.

This young man can now never sleep without violent

nightmares, cannot eat, has lost a stone in weight and is racked by pulsating, hammering headaches so severe he sometimes bangs his head on the wall in agony.

On the night of his suicide attempt this week he said the doctor refused him a painkiller "because I was not patient". He said he did not sleep at all that night. Then he whispered, looking down so I could not see his face: "I just could not see how to go on."

In the past 14 months he has been moved five times,

(who as a minor must be identified as Mr X), and the real Enahoro came back from the depths. "I managed to speak to him on the phone in his hospital and he seems to be getting better," he said.

He and Mr X, who is still very ill, come from the same town, and Enahoro knew his young friend's family. In Campfield they became so close that the young boy would spend all his time with Enahoro and his other Nigerian room mate, Lucky. (Lucky has now been released

mother, his little brother and six sisters of hearing that he is in prison. The distant relatives no longer visit because they say they are ashamed of him for being in jail.

He is a family boy still, and despite his experiences of the past year looks younger than a man who has just turned 27. His family has no phone at home, but has tried unsuccessfully to phone a neighbour, to ask for news of them.

Like other Nigerians who have risked everything in the democracy movement, Ena-

and does not want to meet my eye. His nails are badly bitten. "Although one of my sisters is older than me, you know how it is in Africa, I am the first born and I am responsible for the family ... What happened with the trial shames me," Enahoro feels he has been humiliated and branded a criminal.

Yesterday he was granted legal aid to bring proceedings in the High Court against the Home Office and Group 4 for malicious prosecution. His solicitor, Louise Christian, is

alties, nine West Africans (three of them teenagers) were brought to court on the serious charge of riot. In some hours of confusion thousands of pounds worth of damage were done in the centre.

The Home Office Minister Michael O'Brien was quick to issue a statement the day after the protest, claiming that: "The detainees destroyed their own facilities."

During the trial the prosecution relied mainly on statements from Group 4 eye-wit-

nesses, nine West Africans (three of them teenagers) were brought to court on the serious charge of riot. In some hours of confusion thousands of pounds worth of damage were done in the centre.

Another witness told the court she had felt fearful and panicky. A defence lawyer produced a transcript of an interview with a Group 4 manager in which she had said: "No, I felt very calm actually." She blustered in court that she had never heard that tape and did not know it would be used in evidence.

An issue of broken telephones is indicative of the behaviour of Group 4 warders. The stand-in supervisor was asked whether he had broken a telephone in the ladies' day room. He said, "No". But when he was asked, "Are you saying that if other witnesses say that they saw you break the telephone that they are liars?" he admitted, "We did pull it apart".

He used his baton to break the telephone, with the help of another Group 4 witness who said it did not enter his mind to mention this to the police, although he knew the detainees were blamed.

The trial ended after the judge directed the jury to acquit. Nicholas Jarman QC, for the prosecution, said: "No prosecution properly conducted could or should invite the jury to convict on that evidence." One of the jurors said on leaving the court: "It's Group 4 that should have been on trial, not them."

The Home Office Immigration Service declined to comment on the case last night, referring questions to the Prison Service.

A Prison Service spokesman said: "The last thing we want is people harming themselves ... It is a demonstration that the system works that he was spotted before he harmed himself seriously." Any queries on Enahoro's case, he said, could be answered only by the Home Office Immigration service.

Nigeria's military leadership has promised the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, left, that all remaining political prisoners, including the most prominent among them, Moshood Abiola, right, will be released. Abiola was detained in 1994 for declaring himself president on the basis of 1993 elections whose annulment by the military lies at the root of political crisis in the oil-producing West African country of 104 million people.

Abubakar vows to free prisoners, page 15



with two one-night stays in police stations and two previous admissions to a hospital wing. He had tried once before to commit suicide. He has been naked in a strip cell before, too, at a different prison, Bullingdon. All his possessions were left behind there, and no one in the prison service has bothered to get them back for him.

Enahoro was silent for many minutes, looking down, after talking about how he had felt before the suicide attempt. But later he began to talk about his best friend

from prison, but with no papers to prove his status because of Home Office inefficiency. Mr X would sleep in Enahoro's bed while he slept on the floor.

This is the Enahoro who studied English literature at university, loves poetry, wrote poems himself and had plans to follow his older sister to Lagos and a job in advertising. "No one reads books these days in Nigeria, times are too hard."

This is the Enahoro who is worried about the effects on his diabetic father, his

horos does not believe the military are going to have a sudden change of heart. His main fear about being sent back is for his family.

"I would be picked up and detained at the airport, but I know prison in Nigeria and I'm not afraid for myself, only for what might happen to my family, too."

This is the Enahoro who is still sorry he disappointed his father by not getting good enough maths marks at school to study law.

There are moments when he puts his head down again

applying to the High Court for an emergency injunction to prevent his being deported.

"He would not be able to pursue his case from Nigeria," she said last night.

Meanwhile, an apology from the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, apologies from Group 4 and their removal from Campfield would change things in his mind and allow it to begin to heal.

What happened that day in August in Campfield is no longer seriously disputed. After a protest by more than 100 detainees of many nation-

nesses. The defence relied on evidence from the 42 video cameras in Campfield. What was seen on screen contradicted the written statements, showing the Group 4 guards as confused.

During the trial two of the defendants broke down as the Group 4 witnesses repeatedly claimed to have "recognised" defendants who they had not mentioned in their original statements, refused to identify themselves on video and repeatedly contradicted themselves.

One witness said she had

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Blair promises more cash but fails to name a figure • In return he demands change for the service to become more consumer-friendly

NHS at age 50 'needs to modernise'

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

TONY BLAIR yesterday marked the 50th anniversary of the NHS by launching a crusade to modernise it in the same way he said he had modernised the Labour Party.

Substantial extra money for the service — "the resources it needs" — would be committed as a result of the Government's comprehensive spending review, the Prime Minister told more than 3,000 delegates at the anniversary conference in London.

However, there was a price to pay in return. The NHS had to embrace change and become more consumer-friendly, drawing on best practice in both public and private sectors.

"People's expectations change. People know that hospitals work round the clock, but they still sometimes feel that the instant access, seven day, 24 hour world they normally live in appears to have passed the NHS by."

The service had also to do better at some of the simple things. Too often, people complained of unpleasant food, disrespectful treatment of the elderly and doctors who failed to explain things simply. "None of these things mean that you necessarily get bad treatment... But they are the things you remember. And they are unacceptable in a modern health service."

He confirmed to the conference, which is sponsored by the Guardian, that the NHS would get a three year funding settlement next month.

He gave no indication of its worth — speculation suggests it could be at least £8 billion — but acknowledged that the service was under-funded and that it had faced "very tough" financial limits for the first two years of the Labour government.

The cash would be the Government's side of a contract to renew the NHS. The other side would be an obligation on the service's part to modernise.

"Change and reform there should be — and no vested interests, no conservative instincts, no reluctance to do things differently should stand in the way of that."

In many ways, the problems facing the service paralleled those of 50 years ago. Although people no longer had to worry about paying to see the doctor, there was new insecurity through having to wait for appointments and worry about whether they would fit around work, whether they would be cancelled and whether the allocated surgeon would be the best.

Quality of care was too patchy, and organisation of the service was not tailored to the needs of "the hectic lives that so many people lead". The NHS could achieve efficiency savings of at least 12 per cent if all trusts performed as well as the top



Fiftieth birthday: The Prime Minister with present and former health service workers yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: ROSE HALLAM

quarter. To foster that, the Government intended to designate "beacon" hospitals and surgeries which, like beacon schools, would encourage others to match their excellence.

There would also be an NHS modernisation fund, set up as part of the funding increase, which would support schemes such as hospital refurbishment and computer-

isation provided they yielded results. Liking the approach to modernisation of his party, Mr Blair said: "Modernisation for me was never about ditching traditional values. It was about breathing new life into them. And I feel exactly the same way about the health service."

The speech was well received by the conference at Earls Court, although leaders of NHS organisations reserved final judgement until the size of the funding increase was known.

Karen Caines, director of the Institute of Health Services Management, said that the NHS would need £10 billion over three years to effect real change. After a two-year squeeze, £8 billion would represent little more than a

standstill. "I certainly welcome the tone of what the Prime Minister said, but the issue is how do you turn these aspirations into reality?"

The Conservatives also piled on pressure for the Government to come up with more than £8 billion, claiming that an increase of only that volume would do no more than match what they had done in government.

Hi-tech health care with Internet 'home' visits and operations by robots

David Brindle

CALLING your GP surgery to arrange an appointment will soon be a thing of the past, the Prime Minister has forecast. The NHS Direct service will instead be the first point of contact.

The telephone service, already being piloted as a helpline, will cover 20 per cent of England by next spring and all of it by the millennium. But its role is to develop into a gateway for all forms of treatment.

"Booking a date and a time to see the doctor, or have an operation, will become routine and as simple as booking a plane," said Tony Blair.

"Already there are cardiac patients who are having their heartbeat monitored by phone. And the day is not far off when the Internet and interactive TV will give us the convenience of home visits that can be done through technology."

Later, in the conference exhibition, the Prime Minister used a video link to the Royal Free hospital, north London, to discuss the potential of technology with Paul Wallace, professor of primary care and population studies.

One immediate challenge facing the NHS is to establish a common information technology (IT) system, linking GPs and hospitals so that patient records can be shared among clinicians and the paperwork reduced.

Frank Burns, head of IT strategy for the NHS Executive, told delegates a compre-

hensive IT system would also enable doctors almost instantly to find research relevant to a particular case.

Peter Wells, professor of medical physics and biotechnology at the United Bristol Healthcare trust, forecast that within 20 years, patients could be operated on without anybody else in the theatre.

"There will be robots in the operating room, operated by surgeons in their shirtsleeves outside."

"All those people who are risks of infection will be taken out and the patient will be alone with the robots."

Technological progress was so rapid that it was easily outstripping the cash available for treatments, Prof Wells said.

Although he did not use the word "rationing", he warned: "The main challenge for healthcare systems in the future is to devise ways of ethical allocation of resources according to the prognosis of the patient."

John Burn, professor of human genetics at Newcastle upon Tyne university, said that from next year, the NHS would be carrying out a genetic test on every newborn baby, pregnant woman and surgical patient in order to develop a register of people's vulnerability to disease.

The plan was to develop specific drugs for individuals, according to genetic make-up, was now so sophisticated that one pharmaceutical company alone had a list of 3,000 proposals. The only limit was the supply of technicians to do the development.

Channel 4 comedy drama series will move gays out of the ghetto

Stuart Miller

FIRST there was the Alternative Queen's Speech with Quentin Crisp. Then came the controversial Coming Out theme night. Now Channel 4 is taking its biggest step yet into gay television with Britain's first homosexual drama series.

The eight-part series, described as a comedy drama, has the working title, As Queer As F***, and, set in Manchester, follows the lives and loves of three gay men in this country. It gives a different kind of take on the way gay life is presented, said a spokeswoman. "The aim is to get a large audience, not just to ghettoise it. It will be very contemporary."

The series is one of the first commissions by the station's new head of

drama, Gub Neal, and is part of a push by C4 to restore its "battered reputation" for cutting-edge TV. It has been written by Russell T Davies who helped devise Granada's series The Grand, and will be produced by Nicky Schindler who made the award-winning Hillsborough drama. The series, which could be broadcast next January at the earliest, has been welcomed by gay rights groups. Angela Mason, director of Stonewall, said: "I feel it is part of the growing visibility of lesbians and gay men in this country. If it's judged on the quality of the drama rather than how it handles gay issues it will be a good thing."

Peter Tatchell of the group OutRage! said: "It is great that C4 recognises that its programming should reflect the diversity of our society."

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Donor liver 'caused cancer'

Sarah Bosley
Health Correspondent

A 29-YEAR-OLD patient who received a liver transplant from a woman who had a brain tumour has died of the same type of cancer, a report in today's Lancet medical journal reveals.

The case "gives cause for concern", says a commentary elsewhere in the journal. It raises questions about the safety of using the donated organs of those who have died of brain tumours. But, say Patrick Healey and Connie Davis, of the department of surgery and transplant services at the University of Washington medical center in Seattle, because of the acute shortage of livers, kidneys and other organs, the case is not a reason for banning their use.

Organs from patients who have died of other sorts of cancer are not normally transplanted in Britain, other countries of the EU and the US for fear of tumours developing in the recipients. But primary malignant brain tumours only rarely spread to other parts of the body, and so they have been an exception.

About 900 transplants take place in Britain each year and up to 50 of these might involve donors who have died from a brain tumour. The 47-year-old woman who died had her brain tumour removed, but deteriorated and was diagnosed brain dead four months later, write Stephen Frank and others from the departments of surgical research and neurosurgery and Institute of Pathology at the Technical University of Dresden in Germany.

At post mortem, no other cancers were found. Her relatives gave consent and her liver and kidneys were transplanted into other patients. The two who received kidneys have shown no sign of cancer 52 months later.

But the liver recipient, whose sex has not been revealed, lived for only five months. The body's immune system had been suppressed to receive the transplant, which allowed the cancer to take a rapid hold. Laboratory tests showed the cancer was of the same type as the donor's brain tumour.

The Dresden doctors said that ideally, organs from patients who have died of primary brain tumours should not now be used. But, they write: "Imbalances between the demand for donor organs and their availability necessitates running the small risk of donor transmission. At present the precise risk of this complication is unknown."

The Lancet commentary says this is the third known

Case of cancer transmitted by transplant poses 'a difficult clinical and ethical problem'

case of cancer being transmitted in this way. It poses a difficult clinical and ethical problem.

In the US, there are more than 9,000 patients waiting for liver transplants. In 1996, the waiting time was a year and 563 patients died while on the list. If organs from patients with brain tumours were not used, it would deny 47 patients the chance of life, the commentators say.

Patients with such tumours could be considered "marginal" donors, whose organs would only be used for those who would die without an immediate transplant. "Today's report justifies caution with and further investigation of the use of patients with brain tumours as organ donors. But policy should not be changed before there is more data."



Facial flair: student Andrew Olsen's 'Traditional videowork with Bernard Manning' at Brighton university's Burt Brill and Gardens' graduate shows yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER BAMBER

Liberal Catholics dismayed by papal edict

Parishioners 'voting with their feet' due to Vatican's hard line

Madeline Bunting
Religious Affairs Editor

LIBERAL Catholics responded with incredulity and dismay yesterday to the Pope's edict to stamp out dissent.

Pope John Paul II has ruled in an apostolic letter that on a wide range of issues, including women as priests, the Vatican's teaching "is to be regarded as 'infallible' and binding on all Catholics" or they will face "punishment ranging from warnings to excommunication."

Liberal Catholic groups in the UK and the US argued that this papacy was respon-

sible for the dramatic decline of the Church.

"The clique surrounding the Pope in Rome have taken leave of their senses," said John Challenor, chairman of Catholics for a Changing Church. "They are deliberately shedding all the people they regard as wishy washy and making a hardline, rigid set of the Catholic Church. That has nothing to do with the real meaning of Catholicism, which is about universality and diversity."

The numbers of Catholics in England and Wales had halved in the past 20 years, said Mr Challenor, as many Catholics disaffected with the papacy voted with their feet.



The Pope... criticism for stifling dissent

"What particularly angers liberal Catholics is that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in his explanatory note to the Pope's Letter specifically ruled out

debate on women priests. "There is no basis in scripture to limit the priesthood to men only," said Mike Hilland, a married Catholic priest and co-ordinator of the Advent group. "They say all 12

apostles were men, but that is neither here nor there. Should only Jews be ordained because all the apostles were Jews? Of course not."

"Everywhere I hear criticism of the Pope but it doesn't practise it. It talks of human rights but doesn't practise them. They want Catholics to stop their brains thinking. It's a sad church which needs to kick people out, that's not the way to resolve family problems."

In the US, Catholics for a Free Choice described the Pope's edict as a "pretty desperate move to stifle dissent and the huge wave of calls for church reform."

Of particular concern to many Catholics working as teachers and theologians is that the document is particularly addressed to them. In

recent years rightwing groups, such as Pro Pontifice et Ecclesia, have taken it upon themselves to police clerics, bishops and laity for signs of unorthodox belief. They lobby the Vatican with considerable success.

This papacy has been marked by clashes with leading theologians. Most recently the excommunication of Father Tissa Balasuriya of Sri Lanka was lifted only when he recanted. The German theologian Hans Küng had his licence to teach at a Catholic university withdrawn when he challenged the doctrine of infallibility.

"This apostolic letter is Catholic fundamentalism," said a prominent liberal Catholic who did not wish to be named. "It is a massive extension of the doctrine of infallibility."

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Luke Harding on the tragic background to murder

Control freak with volcanic temper

Billie-Jo Jenkins bloomed as a bright, pretty girl, seemingly happy in a new family where she thought she had found safety and stability



Billie-Jo: neither police nor social workers suspected anything amiss with her new home

The victim

BILLIE-JO Jenkins was not lucky with her natural parents. But in her foster family — who were unrelated but shared a surname — she appeared at last to have found stability, love and happiness.

Her life with Sion and Lois Jenkins had all the hallmarks of a middle-class success story. Fostered at the age of nine, she blossomed into an exceptionally pretty, confident, popular girl, who aspired to be an actress and who had left her chaotic early upbringing behind her. Until, that was, she was bludgeoned to death by the one adult she should have been able to rely on.

Billie-Jo's early years were spent in a tough part of East London. Her father, Bill Jenkins, was an unemployed painter and decorator, who served time in prison after being convicted of GBH, following a vicious assault. He had been arrested originally for attempted murder.

Her mother, Deborah Jenkins, was a heavy drinker with a criminal record of her own, who was found guilty of cheque book fraud. When Billie-Jo was seven, her parents split up. In



Bill and Deborah Jenkins: fled the court in distress after seeing film of the murder scene

August 1989, social services intervened when it seemed likely that Mrs Jenkins would go to prison — just as Mr Jenkins emerged from jail. Billie-Jo, her older brother, Daryl, and younger half sister, Margaret, were all taken into care. After a short period in a children's home, Newham council, in London, decided to try and find the three children a foster family.

It was then that the wheel

of fortune appeared to turn for Billie-Jo. Lois Jenkins, herself a social worker in neighbouring Tower Hamlets, responded to an adoption advert. Billie-Jo attended the same school as the Jenkins' own daughters — and Billie-Jo was also a Jenkins, a happy coincidence. Police checks turned up nothing amiss on Billie-Jo's new family. Lois's and Sion's personal references were legitimate.

So Billie-Jo was fostered by the Jenkins, and found herself with four adoring, ready-made sisters. Not long afterwards mum and dad — as Billie-Jo called them — and the five girls moved to a large Victorian home in Hastings.

There was little doubt that Billie-Jo was a difficult child. At first she would rip the heads off her dolls. And there was one sinister omen. When questioned by social workers, Sion Jenkins admitted that he sometimes "slapped" his natural daughters when they misbehaved. He said this would stop when Billie-Jo joined the family; they believed him.

Billie-Jo settled in well in her new home. She did well at school, and attended the local church. On family videos, she appears a self-confident, open, forthright, boisterous, challenging young woman who was, in the nicest way, something of a challenge to an already overstretched family.

"I knew her for four years," said one social work source. "I often saw Billie-Jo on her own and talked about how she was feeling. She seemed very happy. As far as she was concerned this was a really good home for her. She did very well with them."

So well, in fact, that two months before her death, in

December 1996, Sion and Lois Jenkins became Billie-Jo's legal guardians, together with her natural father, Bill, with whom she still had contact. The visits from her social worker every six to eight weeks stopped. She was, it appeared, totally settled into her promising new life — until the Saturday afternoon when it all ended as she painted the patio doors. She was six weeks short of her 14th birthday.

On the first day of the trial outside court, Bill Jenkins tried to attack Sion, whom he believed had stolen Billie-Jo from him; he had to be restrained by police officers. Watching throughout the trial from the balcony, he and his former wife, Deborah, cut a pitiful spectacle. They always sat apart, sometimes angry, sometimes weeping. When harrowing footage of the murder scene was shown to the jury, both fled the public gallery.

The Jenkins's natural daughters did not appear in court. Their account of their father's movements on that Saturday was conflicting and confused, aiding neither the prosecution nor the defence. After the murder, in notes pinned up outside their home, they paid their own special tribute to Billie-Jo.

"Bye Bill," Lottie's note said. "I think about you every minute of the day. I will never forget you. You were kind and loving and made me laugh. I'll never forget that." Under hearts and kisses, Annie added: "I'll love you forever. You always made me laugh. What's heaven like? I suppose you got there first." She drew a picture of their hamster, adding: "Charlie misses you. Goodbye."

Scene of murder: the Jenkins's family home in Hastings

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and the luckless child he murdered

The killer

TO HIS pupils, to his community, and to his neighbours, Sion David Charles Jenkins appeared to be a model of respectability. He was a deputy head teacher, a Conservative candidate and a committed Christian. To the gifts of a well-connected, and well-off family, he was additionally blessed with suave good looks.

And yet behind this facade Jenkins was a philandering conman with a volcanic temper, who would slap and punch his wife in moments of secret fury.

The summer before Billie-Jo's murder, Jenkins also initiated a predatory affair with a 17-year-old girl, whom he met by chance after calling round at a colleague's house. She and Jenkins were briefly left alone when the colleague went out to collect his teenage son — the girl's boyfriend.

Jenkins and the 17-year-old met on half a dozen occasions, indulging in "sexual fumbling" in the dismal venue of the station car park in Battle, East Sussex. Keen to impress, Jenkins drove to these encounters in his white MG sports car. His wife, Lois, knew nothing of the liaison.

But, although she may have been unaware of her husband's predilection for young girls, she was well acquainted with his capacity for sudden violence.

Even before they got married in December 1982, at a small Baptist chapel in Bournemouth, Jenkins had lost his temper and hit Lois. The abuse continued for 15 years. He was almost "child-like" in his method of assault, according to a detective, often pulling her hair. Once he perforated her eardrum. On another occasion he hurt her so badly she had to be taken to hospital. She gave different accounts of how she came by her injuries, neither implicating her husband.

In the summer of 1996, seven months before the murder, there was a chilling prelude of what was to come. While on holiday with another family, Jenkins was seen hugging Billie-Jo across a room on to a bed and kicking her on her sprained ankle. Realising he had been seen by members of the other family, Jenkins calmly left the room. Nothing more was said.

There is evidence that he found his foster daughter's sexual precocity challenging. While there is no suggestion that he was interfering with Billie-Jo, he did not like the way she behaved. Hours before she was murdered, Billie-Jo put her legs around his shoulders as he crouched.

"She was a natural flirt," a detective said. What irritated Jenkins is the way this wilful 13-year-old was using her sexuality to challenge his authority.

His natural daughters knew not to question his compulsion for total control. When they misbehaved, he would hit them with what they nicknamed "naughty sticks" and slippers. He hit them so often they assumed all children were treated the same way.

At the time of Billie-Jo Jenkins's murder in February last year, Jenkins was living another lie. Not only was he secretly unfaithful to his wife, and abusive to his children, but he had also lied spectacularly about his educational qualifications. His bogus CV had deceived a series of schools, and had propelled him to the top of his profession.

The deputy headmaster of William Parker boys' comprehensive in Hastings, he was due to take over as headmaster the following term. He would have been just 40. On paper he appeared the perfect candidate: enthusiastic, hard working and, above all, well qualified.

In fact, his entire teaching career was predicated on the most simple of deceptions. Despite being sent to one of Scotland's premier fee-paying schools, Glasgow Academy, Jenkins had been a mediocre student, flunking his higher.

"He was not one of our highest fliers," David Comins, the present headmaster, said.

This failure presented him with a problem: how to get on



Sion and Lois Jenkins appealing for help to catch the killer at a news conference in Hastings after the murder of their foster daughter Billie-Jo

PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU

Sion Jenkins was — behind the piety, success and good looks — a lying conman who beat and cheated on his wife

in life? The answer was easy: invent a few more qualifications. After leaving school at 18, in June 1975, following a peripatetic childhood, Jenkins attended Nonington, a now-defunct teacher training college near Canterbury. Here he scraped a pass in PE and art. Twenty years later this humble qualification had been transformed into a degree from Kent university. Soon after his arrest detectives discovered he had not been at Gordonstoun — as he claimed. "His CV was 80 per cent fiction," an officer said.

Astonishingly, no one ever checked. Armed with brilliant exam results, Jenkins's ascent was swift. He taught at schools in Kent and east London, where he acquired a reputation as a "charismatic preacher-teacher".

In 1986 he moved from teaching art to the English department of Stepney Green school in Tower Hamlets. "He had quite a reputation as a philanderer," a close colleague said. "Rumour had it he was having an affair with a secretary. Then he got religion in a serious way."

Although he was careful never to hit the boys he taught, Jenkins's abnormal temper was noted. "There was a kind of controlled fury which could be triggered by terribly small things. I didn't like it because the fury was directed at easy targets," the colleague said.

Jenkins's previous school in Walthamstow, where he was head of media studies, gave him glowing references on his move to Hastings in 1992. "Sion was very charismatic — very good at motivating staff and students alike," the head, Len Banister, said. "He was very enthusiastic and got involved in sports."

Others, however, were staggered at his rise and rise. "There was wild surprise and fairly severe shock that Sion should have been elevated on the basis of not very much," a

member of his department declared.

Jenkins met his future wife, then Lois Ball, at a party in Whitechapel hospital in east London. They married when she was a 21-year-old student nurse and he was a 25-year-old teacher. As well as the assaults on her, Jenkins also punched his eldest daughter, Annie, in the stomach. Annie was so badly wounded she had to lie down to recover.

The neighbours suspected nothing. Nor did the social worker who every six to eight weeks would come down from London to check on Billie-Jo's progress.

"He's a lovely bloke; so even-tempered," neighbour Peter Webb said. "I have never heard him raise his voice," Mr Webb's wife, Ann, added. If Lois told her close female friends what was going on, they kept a discreet silence.

Every brick appeared to be in place — financial, spiritual, political. In 1994 Jenkins stood as a Conservative councillor in a previously safe Tory ward of Hastings, West St Leonards. He lost by 50 votes to a Liberal Democrat. He campaigned on a ticket of family values and law and order.

When he was charged with Billie-Jo's murder, Sion's family refused to talk to the police. Instead, his father put his business contacts to work to help raise the £250,000 costs of bail. Magistrates had decided that, exceptionally, Jenkins was at greater risk in jail than outside it. In the months before the trial, he lived away from his wife and children at a secure house in Aberystwyth, west Wales. One of the best defence lawyers, Anthony Scrivenor QC, was hired, as well as two bodyguards to keep him from harm.

In court Jenkins cut a dapper figure. He may have been estranged from his wife, who was gradually persuaded of his guilt by the police. But, until the end, he seemed confident he would be acquitted.

In the end though, his ability to lie his way out of trouble, a talent which had served him so well in the past, failed to save him from justice.

Why, then, did he kill Billie-Jo?

A detective in the investigation team said of Jenkins: "He is delusional and an absolute control freak. We don't really know why he murdered Billie-Jo, except that he had a temper that didn't show itself very often — but when it did, it was extreme."

"Jenkins controlled everything about his life and the life of his family, but occasionally lost it. He lost control on February 15, but from the minute he dropped that tent spike he was in control again."

"He really believes he didn't murder Billie-Jo because he has blanked it from his mind."

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AIR FRANCE

WINNING THE HEARTS OF THE WORLD

If Scotland is not to become the thin end of the wedge for the Government, Labour needs to wake up.

Mark Seddon, editor of Tribune

This section, page 14

Trust fund saves Old Vic theatre

Don Glatzer
Arts Correspondent

THE Old Vic theatre in London has received a stay of execution following a last-minute intervention by a trust which has put down £1.5 million towards the building's £3.5 million purchase price. The theatre's Canadian owners have given the trust 21 months to produce the remaining £2 million. The sale is well below the original £7 million asking price.

The intervention follows a plea from the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, to the owners, Canadian impresarios Ed and David Mirvish, for more time to allow the private sector to bid to preserve the building as a theatre. Higher bids had been made by groups proposing to turn the theatre into a lap-dancing venue and a nightclub.

Announcing the news yesterday, Mr Smith said: "In February, I called for someone to rescue the theatre. The Old Vic theatre trust's plan shows the energy and determination needed for the task. I am truly thrilled that this has happened and am confident that this marks the start of an exciting new era for a great British theatre."

Alex Bernstein, former chairman of the Granada group, is to chair the charity-

ble trust, with Royal Court director Stephen Daldry and theatre impresario Sally Greene as the other members.

Mr Bernstein said: "All theatre-goers love the Old Vic for its place in the history of British theatre. Our task now is to ensure its future becomes as important as its past." Mr Bernstein was approached just two weeks ago to work with the trust.

Mr Daldry said: "Chris Smith spoke to a number of people about getting a charitable trust together, and said that he would negotiate the delay. I'm the first person to sign off ministers if they're not performing well, but on this occasion he's done really well."

The trust, which will be looking to attract more members, also aims to invest in the fabric of the building, possibly with the help of grants from the National Lottery. "The trust is not in the business of producing plays itself," said Mr Daldry. "We feel it is a home for companies rather than individual productions. We've got to look at the long game. We've got to look at what might be in there in 20 years' time, not tomorrow."

The most obvious candidate to appear at the Old Vic is the Peter Hall Company, which ran an acclaimed repertory season at the theatre until its closure last year.



A grass-lined moccasin from the collection preserved in a Missouri cave

Slingbacks and slip-ons clad feet of Americans in 6300BC

THE early North Americans were a step or two ahead in the world of dress codes. The first fashion shoes — sandals, slingbacks and slip-ons — have been

dated at up to 6,300 years old, writes Tim Radford. The shoes, originally preserved in a dry cave in Missouri and now dated precisely for the first time, are

prehistoric by any measure. In 6300 BC, the first farming communities were experimenting with peas, wheat and barley in the Middle East, and it would be another 1,000 years before the first cities would spring up in Mesopotamia.

And yet across the Atlantic, 2,000 years before the Egyptians began stringing

hairs, people in the New World were experimenting with complex shoe designs, according to the US Journal Science today.

Humans began to camp in the cave in the Missouri River bluffs 10,000 years ago and over 7,500 years kicked off shoes and lost

them. Out of 35 specimens, scientists led by Jenna Kuttruff of Louisiana state university identified four sandals and 13 slip-ons. Four shoes were padded with fibres from a plant known as rattlesnake master. Three had sole, toe, back and vamp. Others were bits of leather and padding. Some told of people wanting to put their best foot forward: fibres were twisted and interlaced to form straps, soles and heels. Some were worn with holes in the sole. "We had artists and craftspeople even then," Kathryn Jacques of Ohio state university told Science.

News in brief

Mothers 'executed'

POLICE are investigating links between the execution-style murders of two young women. Detectives are also considering the possible involvement of drugs.

Michelle Carby, aged 30, was shot in the head on Monday night or Tuesday morning at her home in Stratford, east London. Her children, aged 12, 10 and four ran into the street for help on Tuesday morning. Detective Chief Inspector Andrew Kay, who is leading the investigation, said police were keeping an open mind about links with the murder of Avril Johnson, also 30, who was killed in front of her two young children in her Brixton home last Thursday. She had been tied to a chair before being shot through the head.

— *Duncan Campbell*

Drug boy forgiven

A 14-YEAR-OLD boy who handed an ecstasy tablet to a friend who became Britain's youngest victim of the drug was forgiven by the dead boy's mother yesterday.

Phyllis Woodcock, aged 35, spoke to the boy outside the High Court in Edinburgh, where his case was sent to a children's hearing for sentencing.

"I told him not to blame himself," she said. The boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons, had admitted a charge of culpable homicide. Andrew Woodcock was 13 when he tried the drug. A second accused, Alexander Macfarlane, aged 23, or Motherwell, was jailed for six years after he admitted being concerned in the supply of drugs.

Lawrence adjournment

THE public inquiry into the investigation of the racist murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence was adjourned for two weeks yesterday.

The hearing in south London will reconvene for two days to take evidence from the final two witnesses, Imran Khan, the Lawrence family solicitor, and former Metropolitan police commander Ray

Adams, who was in charge of police operational support. The inquiry chairman, Sir William Macpherson, will then undertake the second part of his task, "to identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and prevention of racially motivated crimes".

He is expected to visit other cities, including Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester, before writing his report for publication later this year.

— *David Pollister*

Abuse costs Met £30,000

A FAILURE to apologise after a student was called an "Irish bastard" and a "thick Faddy" has cost the Metropolitan police £30,000. He was one of two men who yesterday won £10,850 damages at a London court for false imprisonment and assault. Each said he would have been happy to settle for an apology.

James Payne, 34, and George Elmouas, 38, both mature students at Enfield university, north London, were arrested in 1993 after officers saw them take home four discarded bricks. The court heard that Detective Constable Neil Barrie had engaged in a torrent of anti-Irish abuse against Mr Payne and bashed his head against a wall. Costs could be up to £20,000.

— *Duncan Campbell*

Driving card unveiled

THE design of the new driving licence, complete with the holder's photograph, was revealed yesterday. The same size as a credit card, it will also show a copy of the driver's signature, the address, date of birth and driving entitlement details.

Those who pass their test from late July onwards will be issued with the licences. But holders of current non-photo licences will be able to hang on to them until they expire or the details on them change. From July 1999, all applications will result in photocard licences.

Procedures will be tight. Applicants will be required to supply a recent passport-style photograph, countersigned by an authorised person, together with supporting documents.

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	From	To	From	To

Overdraft Rate	% p.a.	% EAR	% p.a.	% EAR
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Agreed overdraft for balances up to £10,000	10.25%	10.7%	10.50%	11.0%
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Unauthorized overdraft	25.20%	26.3%	26.16%	26.9%
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مكتبة من الامم

Next week MPs rule on new charges against Geoffrey Robinson. **David Hencke** sets out the allegations



Geoffrey Robinson... members of the standards and privileges committee will give their verdict on Tuesday

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Minister's moment of truth

ON TUESDAY one of Gordon Brown's closest allies, multi-millionaire businessman and fellow Treasury minister, Geoffrey Robinson, should learn whether he has been a knave or just incredibly lax over his business affairs. At stake is his job at the Treasury, his Parliamentary future, and his reputation for financial competence.

MPs on the powerful Commons standards and privileges committee will have to decide for the second time within a year whether Mr Robinson has failed to disclose to Parliament the full scale of his complex business affairs.

They have had two weeks to mull over a memorandum from Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, on whether Mr Robinson has told him the truth. He did not receive a £200,000 payment from a company owned by the Labour tycoon and crook, Robert Maxwell.

What is emerging from anybody closely connected to the case is that Sir Gordon is not taking the minister's word on face value.

Former fellow Maxwell directors, liquidators and accountants are thought to have been closely questioned by Sir Gordon in his search to trace whether a payment was made. His findings are expected to be very thorough when they are published next week.

Mr Robinson has every reason to be on tenterhooks. Last July the backbench Labour MP, Robert Wareing, faced a week's suspension without pay from Parliament and was forced to apologise to MPs for not declaring a mere £5,000 paid for consultancy work. The suspension stood even though Mr Wareing told

MPs that he had paid the money back. Mr Robinson is facing much bigger charges. Peter Lilley, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, and David Heathcoat-Amory, shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, have three central complaints:

□ They claim he hid from Parliament a £200,000 directorship with Hollis Industries, a company taken over by Robert Maxwell, which went bankrupt in 1991.

□ That he failed to declare another £150,000 payment from another company, Central and Sherwood, owned by Robert Maxwell.

□ They have also asked Sir Gordon to investigate any other associated companies where Geoffrey Robinson was a director to see if he was paid — which again should have been declared to Parliament.

Mr Robinson's explanation is that the accounts of Hollis Industries plc, which record the payment of £200,000, are inaccurate and he was never

paid — so he had no need to declare it. He does not deny receiving the £150,000 payment but says the timing of the publication of the Register of Members' Interests — which logs MPs' remunerations — meant it missed a deadline. Payments only have to be recorded in the year they were made.

His argument on the rest is that there is no need to declare any unpaid directorship.

The effect of a guilty verdict on any of these charges would be devastating for a high-flying minister who has come from nowhere to be a close confidant of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister.

It will also be bound to reopen a closed chapter in the minister's life on his relationship with Robert Maxwell and how he came to amass such a fortune in the 1970s and 1980s.

His well-publicised business relationship with Joska Bourgeois, a Belgian multimillionaire who made him her heir explains part of the picture.

But MPs have been amazed how the former chief executive of Jaguar cars has managed to amass two Lutyns mansions in Surrey and Hampshire, a luxury penthouse in Park Lane, and two luxurious apartments in Cannes as well as a Tuscan estate.

He still has a problem if he is acquitted. One Labour MP put it this way: "His explanation on why he did not declare the money is almost worse than admitting he took the cash."

"What we have is a Treasury minister admitting that he never checked the accounts of company he chaired — which he should do by law — and never noticed for six years that he had been falsely credited with £200,000. What does that say for the competence of a minister of the crown?"

The Paymaster General says he did not receive a £200,000 payment from a company owned by Robert Maxwell. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards is not taking the minister's word at face value

The ties that bound Maxwell and Robinson

Dan Atkinson on the former links with a thieving tycoon and a Belgian tax dodger

THERE is no mystery as to why the tycoon Robert Maxwell took an interest in the business career of Geoffrey Robinson.

In May 1982, Maxwell spoke of his ambition to create a master-company that would re-energise tired British industrial firms in the manner of the state-owned Industrial Reorganisation Corporation (IRC) of the 1960s. By happy chance, Mr Robinson had actually been an IRC senior executive from 1968-70.

Seen in this light, it is also unsurprising that Maxwell should have placed Mr Robinson at the centre of his one-substantial engineering interests as the tycoon sought to regenerate Britain's industrial heartland.

Nor are the generous prices paid by Maxwell for assets associated with Mr Robinson especially sinister. Maxwell paid too much for almost everything he bought, ending with his decision to pay about \$1 billion over the odds for US publisher Macmillan.

But however logical the relationship may be, the ghost of Robert Maxwell is emerging as significant a figure in the Paymaster General's troubles as the ghost of Belgian businesswoman Joska Bourgeois, who established a £12 million "discretionary trust" in the Channel Islands of which Mr Robinson and his family are the beneficiaries.

It was the discovery by the media of this trust last year — shortly after Mr Robinson had been put in charge of a crackdown on tax dodging — that triggered the Paymaster General's current difficulties.

Taken together, the Maxwell and Bourgeois links have, at the very least, tarnished Mr Robinson's image as a successful businessman who made his money the hard way, in the industrial belt of the Midlands. The impression

The Robinsons became, on her death in 1996, discretionary beneficiaries of the Orion Trust she set up in the Channel Islands. In theory this means the trustees could refuse to disburse anything to the Robinsons, in practice it is through Orion that the Bourgeois connection touches Mr Robinson's links with Robert Maxwell.

During 1996, Stenbell — a small personnel company founded by Mr Robinson — bought from Mr Robinson rights worth \$10 million in shares in the TransTec company he had built up with help from Maxwell. Stenbell then sold the shares to Orion in an "arm's length" deal.

TransTec was originally a modest company founded by Mr Robinson to build links between academic research and business. With Maxwell's help, it became the sizeable concern it is today, with £16.7 million profits in 1997.

In 1988, Mr Robinson joined Maxwell on the board of troubled engineers Central & Sherwood, then facing difficulties. In 1990, under Maxwell's watchful eye, TransTec "reversed" into C&S for £5.5 million, against some shareholder protests. The terms for TransTec were generous — but so they were in many deals done in those boom days.

This was one of two big Maxwell-related involvements. In the other, again starting in 1988, Mr Robinson joined Maxwell on the board of Hollis, the one-time furniture company that was to become the hub of Maxwell's private IRC. But by this time Maxwell had lost interest in engineering and sold Hollis to a management buy-out, involving Mr Robinson as non-executive chairman, for £115 million.

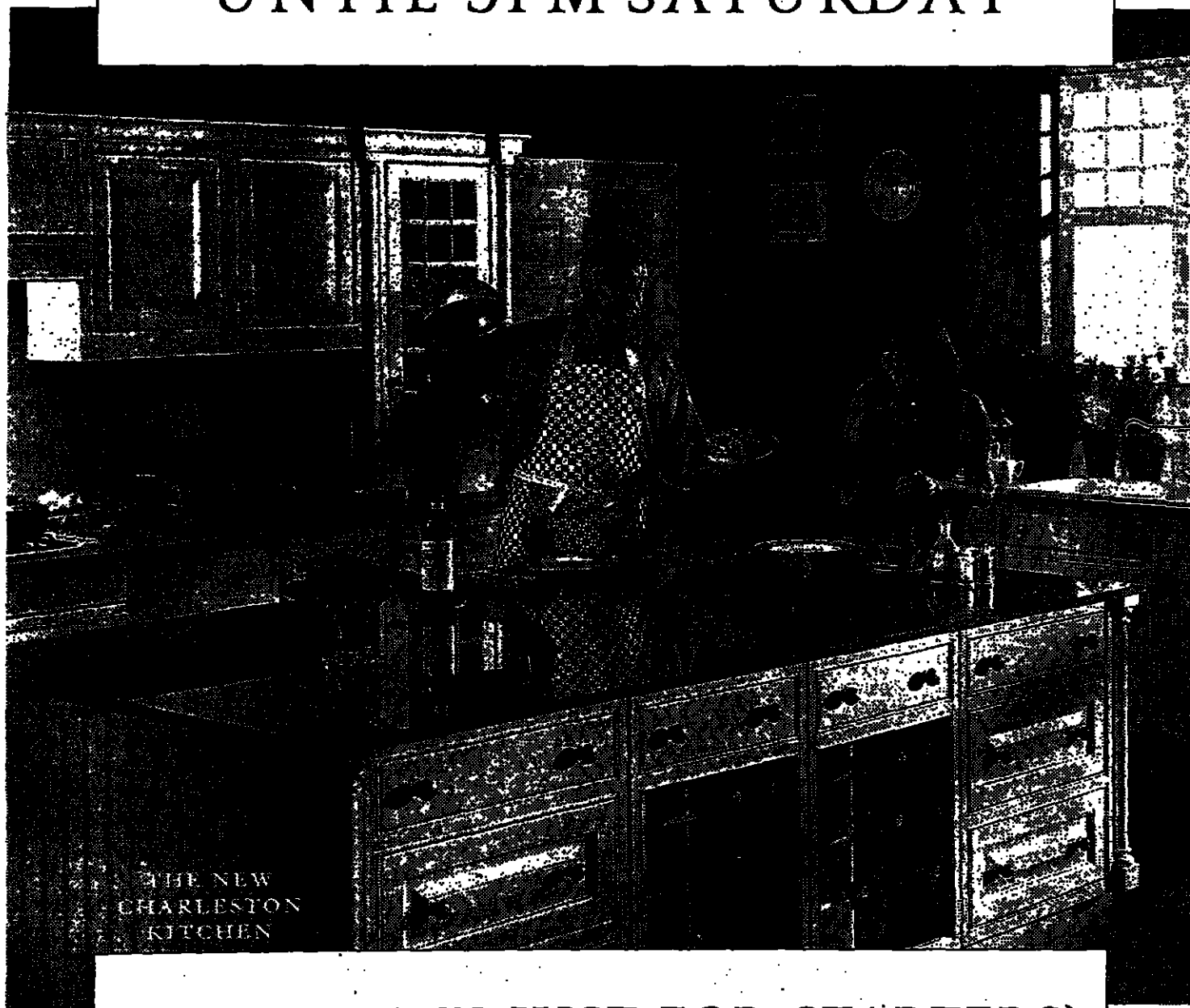
As the boom went sour, Hollis hit problems and Maxwell — who still held a stake — pumped in £40 million in February 1989. Hollis sold off assets and was eventually subsumed into the Maxwell private empire in 1990. Maxwell documentation, never the most accurate, states Mr Robinson received a £200,000 loyalty payment, which he denies.

Whatever the Maxwell connection, one thing is clear. The huge Serious Fraud Office investigation into the tycoon's failed empire showed no interest in Mr Robinson, according to one senior source, his name was never mentioned.

But whereas Mr Robinson the businessman had little to lose from association with colourful characters, the Paymaster General is finding himself judged by tougher standards.

The Maxwell and Bourgeois links have, at the very least, tarnished Robinson's image as a businessman who made his money the hard way, rather than by share shuffling and clever tax planning

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Abubakar vows to free prisoners

Alex Duval Smith
Africa Correspondent

THE United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, said yesterday that he had obtained a promise from Nigeria's military leaders that all remaining political prisoners, including the politician Moshood Abiola, would be released.

The promise appears to signal that Nigeria wishes to shed its pariah status, but the release of Chief Abiola, who was jailed by the military after claiming to have won the 1993 presidential elections, seems to depend on his giving up the claim to lead Africa's most populous country.

"Abiola said he would want to be released to get on with his life," Mr Annan said before leaving the administrative capital, Abuja, after an unscheduled four-day visit.

"He told me, 'I am not naive enough to think I can come out and be president'."

The timing of the release of the estimated 100 prisoners was not clear. Mr Annan said: "The announcement will be made at the appropriate time."

The promise is the strongest sign yet that the new military leaders intend to move away from the isolationist stance of General Sani Abacha, who died on June 8.

Human rights abuses by his regime, including the execution of opponents, led to Nigeria's exclusion from the Commonwealth and an international arms embargo.

His successor, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, has taken steps towards improving Nigeria's relations with the outside world. He has already released at least 30 political prisoners.

But the condition attached to Chief Abiola's release raises new questions about the transition to democracy.

Within days of being elected to power by the military council, Gen Abubakar promised to abide by his predecessor's programme for a transition to civilian rule by October.

There were to be elections on August 1, at which Gen Abacha would have been the sole candidate.

Ever since Chief Abiola, aged 60, was jailed his supporters have maintained that he should be released to head a government of national unity to organise new elections.

But other opponents of the military regime do not want Chief Abiola to oversee such a transition.

Mr Annan said: "There was no one saying we have a president who should come and take over. Everyone was saying we want new, free and fair elections."

Crucially, the majority of the country's military leaders — drawn almost exclusively from the north — would be unlikely to countenance a transition government under Chief Abiola, a businessman from the south-west.

In recent days Chief Abiola, who has been moved from prison to house arrest, has met Eneke Anyaoku, secretary-general of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth suspended Nigeria in 1995 after the execution of nine minority rights activists, including the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa.

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Frustrated Berbers clash with Algerian police as march on presidency is blocked

AN INJURED woman is carried away after demonstrators stoned police in Algiers who stopped a march on the presidency called by a

mainly Berber political party angered by the killing of singer the Lounès Matoub.

Chants of "GIA, Pouvoir assassin" suggested that the crowd blamed both the rebel Armed Islamic Group and the authorities for the singer's death a week ago.

Lounès was a vocal supporter of the Berber cause and an outspoken democrat. Berbers are also angry at a law which will make the use of Arabic compulsory in business and education from Sunday. — Reuters

Mystery of how Clive's gold surfaced

David Berezford
in Johannesburg

IT COULD be described as a treasure hunt with a difference — Clive of India's gold has been discovered, but the question is who found it?

The gold coins — 1,200 of them — have materialised in the vaults of the London fine arts dealer Spink and Son of St James, but no one seems to know how they got there.

The issue is contentious because the South African government is preparing to do battle for the treasure, claiming it was found within its territorial waters.

The coins were last seen when Clive had them loaded on board the Doddington for shipment to India. In 1755 the ship hit a reef off Port Elizabeth and sank, with the loss of 247 lives. There were 23 survivors.

The gold passed into the annals of lost treasure, in which South Africa's stormy coastline is rich.

The wreck of the Doddington was found in 1977 but there was no sign of the gold — not, at least, not until Spink and Son announced last year that they would be putting the missing coins up for auction.

Pretoria served a writ earlier this month claiming ownership and demanding the coins' return.

Spink said it would not be appearing to defend the case. Instead a mysterious figure — an American called Daniel Sedwick — materialised. He did not claim ownership of the gold, but said he was the consignee and would be contesting the case.

The outcome is likely to turn on how the coins — estimated value £300,000 — were moved from the bottom of the sea, about 34 miles offshore, to Spink and Son.

The Times offered a theory in a report on the planned auction, claiming that an unidentified team searched the wreck again last year, 20 years after the Doddington was sunk.

The paper suggested that, as they were about to give up, the team stumbled on the wreck of another, heavily armed, vessel which contained the coins.

The salvors believed it was a pirate ship, but there is no record of the Doddington survivors speaking of the coins being taken by pirates.

Asked this week where the pirate was found, Richard Bishop, a Spink's coin specialist who was to have conducted

the auction, said: "We were told it was in the Indian Ocean."

The location is relevant if it lies outside South African territorial waters — at the shortest distance, a few miles from the Doddington.

The saga of Clive's gold has brought home to the South African authorities the inadequacy of their controls on maritime treasures. The country's National Monuments Council is responsible for licensing shipwreck salvage operations, but the governing legislation does not specify who owns any treasure discovered.

Divers are required to hand the treasure over to the council, which can decide what it keeps and what is returned to the finder. The temptation is for the finder to smuggle the treasure out of the country.

Clive of India: His coins had been missing since 1755, until they materialised in the vaults of a London fine arts dealer



Clive of India: His coins had been missing since 1755, until they materialised in the vaults of a London fine arts dealer

Groom sues for damages after stripper's double whammy

Joanna Coles in New York

A WEEK before his wedding, Paul Shimkoni went to the Diamond Dolls strip club in Clearwater, Florida. The club was used to stag nights and had ensured its favourite dancer, Tawny Peaks, was on duty for his stag night.

Mr Shimkoni sat on a low chair on stage and was told to put his head back and relax. Alas, what happened next was anything but relaxing.

Ms Peaks began dancing and rubbing her assets, which at capsize 69HH are surgically enhanced, in his face.

Mr Shimkoni claims the joint weight of her breasts was so heavy that his neck was thrust backwards and he suffered whiplash. He is suing the club for \$15,000, claiming he suffered "disability, pain, mental anguish and disfigurement".

"She slammed her breasts on my head and just about knocked me out," Mr Shimkoni said yesterday. "It was like two cement blocks hit me. I saw stars."

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CNN retracts story of army using sarin on deserters

Martin Kettle in Washington

CNN television yesterday retracted its controversial allegations that the US military used sarin nerve gas during a Vietnam war mission to kill American deserters hiding in Laos.

CNN said its story about the Operation Tailwind mission, which appeared jointly on its new flagship programme and in Time magazine under the bylines of April Oliver and Peter Arnett, "cannot be supported", and offered a full apology to viewers.

Journalistic standards in the United States have already come under scrutiny after reports of fabricated stories in New Republic magazine, the Boston Globe and the Cincinnati Enquirer. The media's role in the Monica Lewinsky affair has also been criticised, including allegations that increased competition and journalistic careerism have caused it to become infected by "British standards".

CNN's retraction came after it hired a leading libel lawyer, Floyd Abrams, to investigate the sarin story.

It was challenged by former military and government sources almost immediately after it was broadcast less than a month ago. The Pentagon said it had no evidence to support the allegations but ordered an inquiry.

CNN's military consultant, Major-General Perry Smith, called the account "lazy journalism" and resigned.

CNN was attacked by Vietnam veterans, many of whom pointed out that its owner, Ted Turner, is married to the anti-Vietnam war campaigner Jane Fonda.

The Operation Tailwind story was carried in full in Britain by the Observer, the Guardian's sister paper.

Mr Abrams's report concluded that the story was not supported by the facts. It said there was insufficient evidence that sarin, or any other deadly gas, was used and that CNN could not confirm that American deserters were targeted, or were even at the camp in Laos.

CNN said yesterday the fault lay with the "editors, producers and reporters and executives responsible for the report, the programme and its contents" and promised "vigorous steps" to strengthen its procedures.

The volte-face will bring into question the positions of Ms Oliver, who was the CNN producer in charge of the investigation, and Mr Arnett, who was the principal reporter. The reporting of Mr Arnett, a Pulitzer prizewinner, from Baghdad during the Gulf war made him CNN's highest-profile journalist.

A Pentagon spokesman, Kenneth Bacon, said it was "obviously gratified" by CNN's retraction. Mr Bacon said the apology was "very helpful" to the personnel who had taken part in the 1970 mission. "I hope that the retraction will get the same publicity that the initial charges did," he said.

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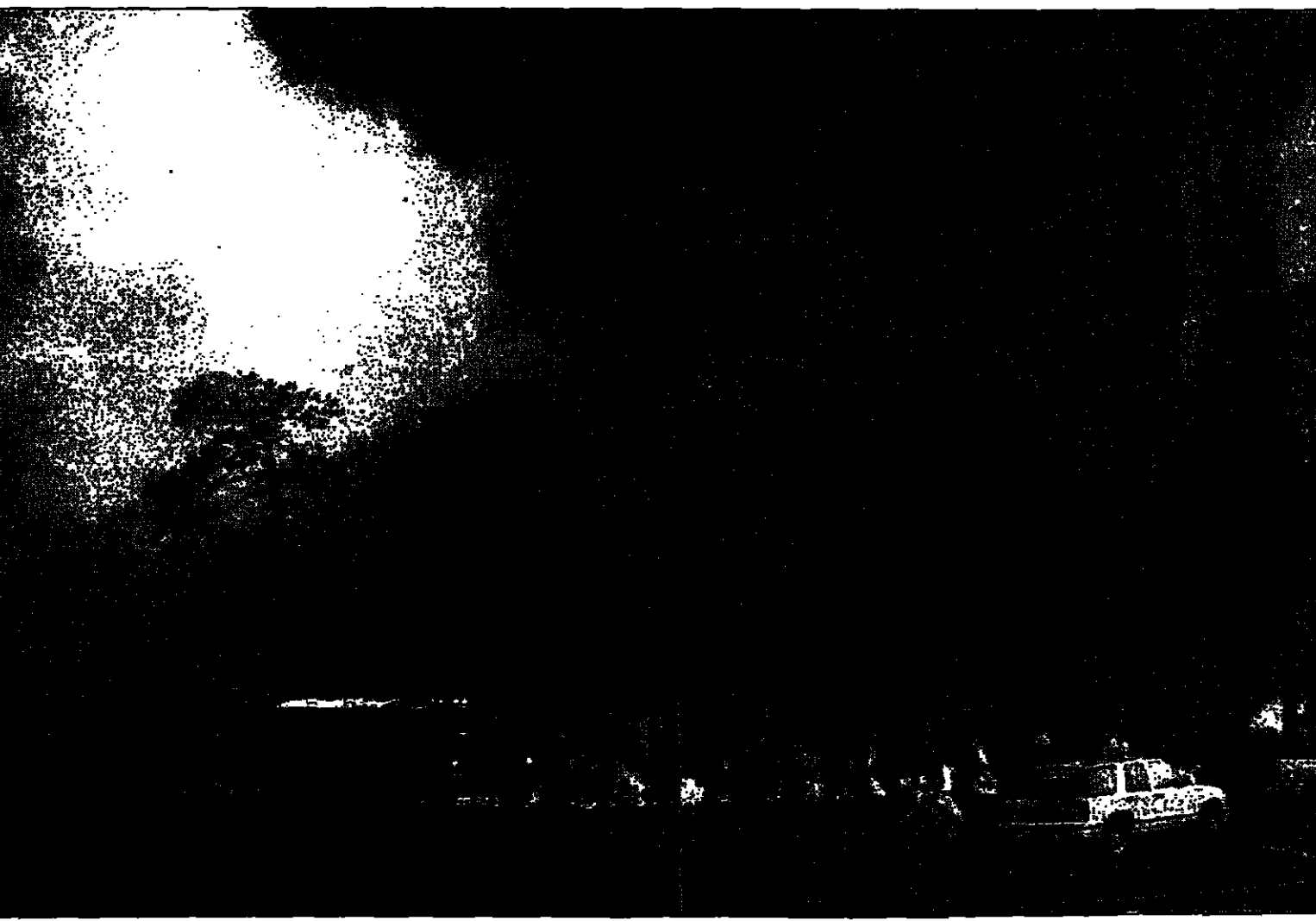
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The magazine's managing editor, Walter Isaacson, also retracted the story and apologised for running it. "We respect the serious and forthright way that CNN has examined this story, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with them."

The CNN statement, broadcast several times yesterday, said nothing was more important to a news organisation than a reputation for accuracy, fairness and responsibility.

The statement said CNN acknowledged serious faults in the use of sources who provided its original reports and that it alone bore responsibility for both the television report and the Time article.



Dense smoke and fire engulf a main road in the town of Scottsboro in Brevard county

PHOTOGRAPH: PETER COSGROVE

Fires sweep across Florida

Martin Kettle in Washington

DOZENS of homes have been destroyed and thousands of people evacuated as wildfires rage across large areas of eastern Florida. With no rain in sight, firefighters predicted yesterday that the blazes could only get worse.

More than 35,000 people have been ordered to leave their homes and more than 135 miles of the main north-south coastal freeway were closed as the fires swept closer to coastal communities.

From Jacksonville in the north, south past Daytona Beach towards the Kennedy Space Centre at Cape Canaveral.

In the past month more than 1,700 fires, many started by lightning striking the state's extensive pine forests, have spread across an area of nearly 400 square miles.

The biggest concentration is in the area west of Daytona Beach, from where more than 30,000 people have been evacuated. A further 5,000 were evacuated from the Brevard area.

Suharto makes friends to protect his family wealth

Philip Shannon in Washington

Former president Suharto of Indonesia is working to re-establish a political power base to shield his family's financial empire from scrutiny by future governments, according to White House officials and Western diplomats in Jakarta.

There is no direct evidence that the Suharto family has tried to bribe political or military leaders, but the officials say the Suharto family is offering to underwrite the political campaigns of legislators

who vow loyalty to the family, which has a fortune worth millions of dollars.

United States officials and diplomats agree that he does not appear to be seeking reinstatement as president. He resigned on May 21 after protests by tens of thousands of Indonesians.

But they say intelligence reports show that he is using his wealth and ties to the military to help his children retain their businesses and their top posts in the ruling political party.

Next week the party, known as Golkar, is holding a special national congress to pick new leaders.

Mr Suharto is still chairman of its board of patrons, and two of his children have been appointed to the seven-member organising committee for the congress. Four of his children are members of the country's highest legislative body, the People's Consultative Assembly.

That Mr Suharto, aged 77, retains close ties to the powerful military was evident in June when he accompanied several generals to Islamic prayers in military mosques in Jakarta, the capital.

Suharto has been very active, rounding up support wherever he can find it," a senior US official said.

Another said: "(He) knows that he can't be president again, but he is going to make sure that his kids and his cash survive whatever comes."

Despite the recent collapse of the Indonesian currency, the Suharto family is still widely believed to be among the richest on earth.

After his resignation on May 21, Mr Suharto went into seclusion for a few weeks, reportedly depressed by his overthrow after 32 years in power.

But diplomats and US officials say he has been working behind the scenes to restore his contacts with political, military and religious leaders.

Rumours that he may try to return as president, with the help of the army, have swirled through Jakarta since he stepped down. Military leaders have made public statements denying that they are helping him return to power.

He was succeeded by his vice-president, B.J. Habibie, who was considered his protégé, but it is unclear what sort of relationship exists between them.

— New York Times

Suharto: Making use of his contacts in the armed forces



Suharto: Making use of his contacts in the armed forces

Cabinet threatens action in courts and at World Trade Organisation to block sanctions against banks by US legislatures

Swiss dig in on 'Jewish gold' claims

Mark Tran in New York

THE Swiss government threatened to take the United States to the World Trade Organisation yesterday as state and local authorities in the US announced sanctions against Swiss banks accused of misappropriating the assets of Holocaust victims.

It expressed support for any legal action taken by Swiss companies, and said it was considering filing a complaint with the WTO, created to arbitrate in international trade disputes. The WTO can require its member countries to honour their commitment

to global trading regulations. "These kinds of sanctions are counter-productive, unjustified and illegal," the Swiss Federal Council — the cabinet — said. "They constitute a danger to the good bilateral relations between Switzerland and the US."

It urged local American finance officials and plaintiffs who are pressing class-action lawsuits in the US against the Swiss banks "to return to a serious, calm discussion" of the dispute.

The Swiss anger followed a decision by a monitoring committee representing about 800 municipal and state financial officers in the US to lift a moratorium on sanctions it imposed eight months ago.

The green light for sanctions came after the breakdown of talks on a global settlement between Jewish groups and the three biggest Swiss banks — Credit Suisse, Swiss Bank and Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS).

The US state department argues that sanctions will harden the banks' position and damage US-Swiss relations and the reputation for openness of US financial markets.

Not since apartheid South Africa was treated as a pariah by state and local authorities in the US has there been a boycott with such wide public support. California will become the first state to impose sanctions. Its treasurer, Matt Fong, who oversees \$32 bil-

"This is a last resort forced upon us by the inability of Swiss banks to bridge the small gap between them and the plaintiffs"

Alan Hevesi, New York City comptroller



lion of state funds, said California would not seek new contracts with US subsidiaries of Swiss banks.

New York state and city officials said they would bar short-term investments with Swiss banks and stop them

selling state and city debt unless there was a settlement by September 1. If the impasse continued, sanctions would affect additional financial services on November 15 and all Swiss companies on January 1, 1999.

"This programme of actions is a last resort forced upon us by the continuing failure of the Swiss government to participate in the negotiations or even support an agreement, and by the inability of the Swiss banks to bridge the small gap between them and the class-action plaintiffs," said Alan Hevesi, the New York city comptroller.

Several states are contemplating action. The New Jersey legislature is considering a

bill requiring the state to withdraw \$66 million invested with Union Bank of Switzerland until assets are returned to Holocaust survivors. Vermont, Rhode Island and Kentucky are looking at the possibility of sanctions. Last year Massachusetts ended its \$120,000 contract with UBS.

Tens of thousands of Holocaust victims deposited money in Swiss banks as Hitler gained power in Europe. But relatives of those who died in concentration camps say that after the war bank officials stonewalled survivors and their heirs, claiming that they could not find the accounts or demanding non-existent death certificates before releasing funds.

Last month Credit Suisse, Swiss Bank and UBS offered to pay a maximum of \$600 million to settle the claims. Jewish leaders dismissed the sum as "insulting" and "humiliating", arguing that it was far less than the dormant wartime assets that Holocaust victims allege the banks stole from their families.

Jewish groups have proposed a \$1.5 billion settlement, covering claims against all Swiss banks as well as the Swiss government.

A panel of historians appointed by the Swiss government has concluded that far more looted gold passed through the Swiss national bank than through the Swiss commercial banks combined.

Russia's new rich evict the landed poor

City families who depend on countryside plots for food are being squeezed out, writes **Tom Whitehouse** in Moscow

RUSSIA'S most successful pop singer, Alla Pugachova, paid for road improvements to buy off local people who opposed her building a garish red-brick home in the countryside. The villagers now have better access to the shops, and she can get to and from Moscow faster.

But not everyone is happy. Moscow's growing ranks of subsistence farmers, who commute each day to allotments on the city's outskirts, see Pugachova and her like as a threat to their livelihoods.

The picturesque spots that the New Russians want for weekend retreats lie on the fertile land they need to survive.

Millions of Russians now return to the land that their peasant grandparents abandoned. City buses and trains leave for the country each day, packed with commuter-gardeners.

Once Russia's 11 million allotments brought variety and vitamins to the sausage-heavy Soviet diet. Now they are the mainstay of subsistence farming in a country where sausages are a luxury.

"We gardeners get bad, wet land because the New Russians have bought the best plots," says Yevgeny

Rlyano, chairman of an allotment co-operative in Solnechnogorsk, close to Villa Paganini.

Getting land and permission to build on it is a simple matter of bribery. "In theory of course, access to land is equal and you're not supposed to be able to buy land," he says. "But in reality the rich have ways of persuading the local authorities to grant them the land they want."

The post-Soviet countryside is being assaulted on all sides. For their weekend leisure the New Russian rich want golf courses, country clubs and their own *kotlazi* (the Russian pronunciation of cottage, which they use to refer to big Westernised red-brick mansions).

Poor city-dwellers want allotments. The locals just want to be left alone.

"In the summer we have anarchy here and the population trembles," says Vladimir Popov, director of Solnechnogorsk region, north-west of Moscow.

"Muscovite gardeners just throw their rubbish away in the woods, destroying our natural beauty. We have to pay to clean things up."

Another expensive problem is cleaning the roads of blood and glass after high-



Allotments once brought variety and vitamins to the Soviet diet; now that sausages are a luxury they provide staples for the poor. PHOTOGRAPH: GLEB KOSORUKOV

speed car crashes caused by impatient weekenders. But at least the rich help pay for their debris by bringing money into the region.

"New Russians support local shops and sometimes even improve the infrastructure," says Mr Popov. "The gardeners spend nothing here. They only take things away."

In the past seven years 12 per cent of Solnechnogorsk has disappeared under luxury housing developments, squeezing out allotments.

While bodyguards in off-road vehicles deliver ex-

pensive Spanish salads from city supermarkets to their employers' country homes, subsistence farmers fight a losing battle for the land they need to feed themselves.

The new multi-storey dacha blocks guzzle water and cast long shadows over neighbouring land, making it less fertile.

The landless are forced to improvise. In one national park, 400 miles north of Moscow, wardens turn a blind eye to city potato-

planters in return for a share of their produce. "I do not like the way

things are going," says Mr Popov, revealing his blueprint for a new leisure complex in Solnechnogorsk.

"But it's inevitable that country regions close to Moscow will be taken over by the leisure industry, while gardeners are pushed further and further away."

News in brief

Bomb blast in Budapest

A car bomb exploded just off the main tourist street of Budapest yesterday, killing four people and wounding 25, doctors and witnesses said.

The blast brought new attention to bear on a recent surge in violent crime, much of it blamed on gangland turf wars, that has hit the Hungarian capital. — Reuters.

Farmers' manhunt

A posse of South African farmers and army reservists tracked down a gang of armed robbers and shot three dead, police said yesterday. Civil rights activists expressed concern that the trend of citizens taking the law into their own hands could raise racial tensions. — AP.

Pakistan killings

Rival factions of a militant ethnic group terrorising the Pakistani city of Karachi killed 11 people yesterday, including two policemen and two paramilitary soldiers, police said. — Reuters.

Drugs burn

Iranian officials burnt 51 tonnes of heroin and opium yesterday, enough to supply markets in Britain, Italy and France for more than a year.

Drunk Depardieu

The French actor Gerard Depardieu has been ordered to stand trial on drink driving charges following an accident earlier this year, an official said yesterday. He could face up to two years in jail, heavy fines and a five-year driving ban. — Reuters.

Mir no more

Russia decided yesterday to retire the Mir space station next June, six months earlier than expected, because of financial woes, space officials said. NASA welcomed the decision, which will allow Moscow to focus efforts on the new International Space station. — Reuters.

Russian gas company betters the prime minister in tax row

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

ATTEMPTS by the prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, to crack down on tax evasion descended into chaos yesterday and threatened to imperil a desperately needed rescue package from the International Monetary Fund.

Mr Kiriyenko started the day with a bold order to seize the assets of Russia's largest company and biggest taxpayer, the gas monopoly Gazprom. But he was forced into a U-turn by parliament and President Yeltsin's intervention.

Last year Gazprom made more than \$4 billion profit. The Russian state has a 40 per cent controlling stake, but has been unable to secure regular payment of taxes and is owed more than \$250 million.

Keen to impress the IMF that no company, however powerful, is immune from his new tax regime, Mr Kiriyenko threatened to sack the board as well as seize Gazprom's assets.

But its directors have clout in parliament and the media, and mobilised both in its defence.

"It is wrong that the government has now decided to extort taxes from Gazprom by any means," said the Speaker of the lower house, Gennady Seleznyov.

The Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, smelt a foreign plot. He said the IMF had long insisted on splitting Gazprom and this was "tantamount to splitting the Russian Federation", which was already falling apart. "We shall not allow it," he said.

The IMF, whose envoy to Russia yesterday extended his stay by a week to take in the latest developments, has lobbied for Gazprom to be di-

vided into production and transport companies to weaken the political power it demonstrated yesterday.

A spokesman for President Yeltsin said no changes to the Gazprom board were envisaged. The deputy prime minister, Boris Nemtsov, said the government was satisfied with the company's latest promise to pay its tax arrears, even though Gazprom has reneged on such pledges before.

The decision to lay off Gazprom undermines the Rus-

sian government's case for a \$10 billion IMF rescue package. Without this, the rouble may come under renewed pressure.

Businessmen will be asking why they should pay taxes if Russia's richest company escapes doing so. And unless the government can provide proof of rising tax receipts it may be in difficulty with the IMF.

The decision also reveals that the political battle to succeed president Yeltsin is as intense as ever.

TEACHERS PROVIDENT SOCIETY

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A

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at Tringham House, Wessex Fields, Dunsleagh Road, Bournemouth BH7 7DT

To approve partial alterations to the Memorandum of the Society as recommended by the Committee of Management

By order of the Committee MS Rule ACIS, Secretary 26 June 1998

The resolution will not be effective unless it is passed at a special resolution. A Member entitled to attend and vote at the Special General Meeting may appoint one person (whether a Member or not) as his proxy to attend and, on a poll, to vote instead of him and may direct the proxy how to vote at the Meeting. The main purposes of the proposed memorandum changes are:

- (1) the inclusion within its purposes Pension Fund Management and carrying on business outside the United Kingdom and
- (2) the formation of, and giving assistance to, subsidiaries and joint controlled bodies.

Proxy forms can be obtained from the Secretary at the Registered Office. Telephone 01202 455200. Proxy forms must be received at the Registered Office no later than 21 July 1998. Teachers Provident Society Limited is an incorporated Friendly Society. Registered Office: Dunsleagh Road, Bournemouth BH7 7DT.

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(annual interest option)		
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\$25,000+	6.64	5.31
\$50,000+	6.73	5.38
\$100,000+	6.83	5.46

Gross: the rate before the deduction of tax applied to interest on savings. Net: the rate after the deduction of tax applicable to interest on savings accounts, currently 20%. Higher rate, tax payers will have an additional liability.

(1) This product is no longer available to new customers.

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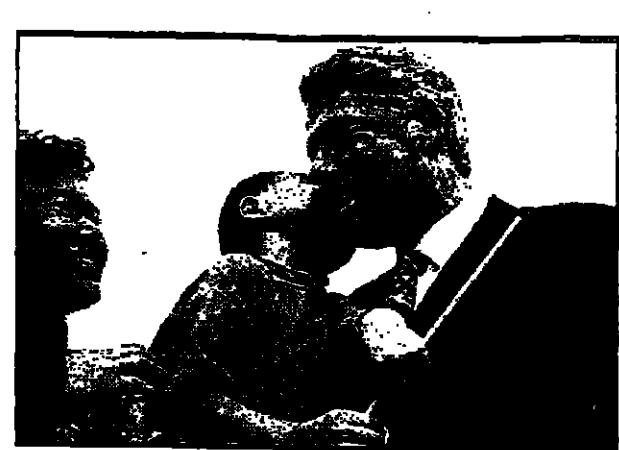
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VSO in association with The Guardian

President Clinton turns on the charm for China, while Washington's old friends feel the cold



All smiles... President Clinton admires the famous limestone Gullin Peaks during a boat trip down the Li River, reaches out to shake hands with villagers in Yucun, and wins a kiss from a child at a housing project in Shanghai

PHOTOGRAPHS: OREGA GIBSON, LUKE PIAZZA AND ROCK WILKINS

Hong Kong sees Jiang's two faces

John Gittings in Hong Kong

SOMEONE else with the name Jiang Zemin was making news yesterday in Hong Kong. He was not called president but chairman. He was not wearing a dark suit but an olive green uniform.

The huge red banner at the Chinese naval base on Stonecutters' Island, spelt it out: "Welcome Chairman Jiang to review our troops in Hong Kong on the anniversary of

the handover." A red carpet 250 yards long was laid along the quayside to help him do so. China may be changing but it is still important for the top man to hold all the reins. Mr Jiang is president when he meets Bill Clinton, and secretary-general when the Communist Party meets. But he would not feel secure in either job if he were not also chairman of the Central Military Committee.

Mr Jiang had changed his clothes as well as his title when he stepped on shore: the plain army jacket was a little

tight around the waist, but it matched the uniform of the garrison officers escorting him. Reviewing the troops also requires a lexical shift evoking older ideals of unity between the army and the masses. "Comrades, you are working very hard," Mr Jiang shouted as he passed the crews of several patrol boats at attention. "It's because we are serving the people," they shouted back in unison.

He gave the same greeting to some assembled helicopter

crews; they gave the same reply. Out in the new world of mobile phones, private housing and the Shanghai Stock Exchange, most Chinese would snigger at the idea of serving anyone except oneself. To use the term "comrade" has for many years been to risk giving grave offence. But not in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), at least when it is on show. Stonecutters' Island still has colonial bungalows wreathed in convolvulus and signs pointing in English to the

"guardroom", left behind when the British pulled out last year. But the slogans are different now. "Obey the mission entrusted by the motherland," reads one. "Carry out its sacred instructions." Speaking to senior officers and guests inside the base headquarters, Mr Jiang recalled the image of the PLA's midnight arrival in Hong Kong a year ago. They might be few in number, he said, but they were the cutting edge of the nation.

And echoing an earlier chairman — Mao Zedong after liberating China in 1949 — he declared that by taking back Hong Kong, "the Chinese people have stood up".

On the mainland, the PLA is not as popular as it used to be: its officers have the best foreign cars and eat in the best hotels. But in Hong Kong they have kept a low profile, and their discipline yesterday was exemplary.

Contingents from all three services stood at attention for an hour. Then, when Mr Jiang left, they clapped in unison softly for five minutes, until the whole entourage had left.

Something seemed different about Mr Jiang when he re-emerged: he had changed back into the dark suit which makes him look so urbane. He was on his way to open the new airport. It is not a place where the term comrade will often be heard.

Echoing Mao, Jiang said that by taking back Hong Kong, 'the people have stood up'

He put past wrangles aside to acknowledge Britain's role in launching the airport project. Various senior British figures, including the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, on his way to Beijing, said nice things about China yesterday, too.

Then Mr Jiang took off for home in China One — just hours before his new chum Bill Clinton touched down in Air Force One to spend today in Hong Kong.

It's A Slow and Painful Way To Die..



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At midday today Joanna Lumley will hand in a personal letter and thousands of signed postcards to Tony Blair calling for an end to the horrific export trade in live cattle.

A trade subsidised by EU taxpayers - that's all of us. Nearly £200 million is paid to the exporters to send live cattle, like this one, from the EU to the Middle East every year. To be slaughtered on arrival. A callous way to reduce the beef mountain. A brutal way to treat a living creature.

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'Bullying' letter fuels bitterness in Bangladesh

Arshad Mahmud in Dhaka

BANGLADESH was smarting yesterday at what a senior official denounced as a "bullying attempt" by the United States "to bully us" into awarding lucrative oil and gas exploration contracts to two US multinationals.

The resentment was sparked by a letter from Bill Richardson, the recently appointed US ambassador to the United Nations, in which he made little attempt to hide his annoyance at delays in awarding two contracts to Occidental Petroleum and Unocal, which last year tendered for the right to tap Bangladesh's gas and oil reserves.

"Speaking frankly, I'm troubled by reports that the nature of the joint venture between Occidental Petroleum and Unocal to develop blocks 13 and 14 is in jeopardy," Mr Richardson wrote. "In light of the significant concessions that have already been offered, I urge you to move swiftly to grant the extension the companies are requesting so that they get on with their important work without further delay."

As if the pressure was not enough, he brought Bill Clinton into the letter to convey his tough message. "Nothing would please me more than to

inform President Clinton that the US companies were awarded the blocks they're seeking," Mr Richardson wrote.

The letter, published in the mass-circulation Janakantha newspaper on Tuesday, has aroused resentment at the way Bangladesh is treated while Mr Clinton tries to woo China on his current tour of the country despite its human rights record.

Terming the letter "highly objectionable and unfortunate", a senior Bangladesh official said: "We don't think we can do much about it, as this is a unilateral move by the US with little choice but to swallow this kind of insult."

A senior energy ministry official said they were scrutinising all aspects of the bidding, especially the Occidental tender, because of a serious accident at the Magurchara gas field in north-eastern Sylhet last year while that company was involved in exploration.

Diplomatic observers have questioned whether it was appropriate for Mr Richardson, who is not the US energy secretary, to intervene. But a US embassy spokesman in Dhaka said: "There's nothing unusual about an American UN ambassador contacting the host country government about diplomatic matters."

Even now, the powerful green smell of recently cut summer grass invokes distasteful memories of discipline and preposterous tests of aggression. Bill Buford on American football

Jilted Japan looks sourly at Beijing love-in

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

THE US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, flies into Tokyo today to soothe Japanese fears that Washington's wooing of Beijing is becoming too intimate.

This concern has been the subject of anxious editorials in Japanese newspapers since the start of President Clinton's high-profile trip to China. The visit, eight months after the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, went to the United States, has fuelled the fear that the Clinton administration may be ditching an ailing Japan as its main ally in Asia in favour of fast-growing China.

Some articles point out that Mr Clinton's entourage in China is much bigger than any that has visited Japan and that the nine-day stay is far longer. At Beijing's insistence, Mr Clinton is travelling directly to and from China, without the stop-off in Tokyo that is usual on presidential visits to Asia.

The tone of some of the summit pronouncements has also caused anger in Japan.

Mr Clinton has praised China for "great statesmanship and strength" in contributing to the stability of the region by not devaluing its currency. The Japanese government, meanwhile, has faced a barrage of international criticism for failing to boost domestic demand and clear up the bad-loan problems that plague its banking sector. "I think that ultimately President Jiang and I would give anything to be able to wave a wand and have all of this go away," Mr Clinton said in a patronising reference to the recession in Japan and its effect on the regional economies.

Comments like this have been interpreted here as a sign that Washington has moved from a period of Japan-bashing to Japan-bypassing. Comparisons have been made with US foreign policy in the 1930s.

The source said Ms Albright would be expected to restore a sense of balance while she was in Japan to brief the government on the Clinton-Jiang summit.

when the US, forced to choose between the two far eastern powers, aligned with China.

But diplomats on both sides of the Pacific have played down the inference that Japan has been passed over.

"I am a bit puzzled that warmer US-China ties [are seen to] somehow undermine the US-Japan relationship," the US ambassador to Japan, Thomas Foley, said this week. "The fundamental bilateral partnership in Asia is with Japan, as it has been in the last several decades, and will be in, as far as I can see, into the next century."

Japanese diplomats emphasise the mature nature of the Tokyo-Washington relationship, compared with the still evolving ties between the US and China. They point out that Japan has contributed billions of dollars more than China to IMF bail-out packages and is a reliable ally that hosts nearly 50,000 US troops.

The fear of losing out to China in American affections is more imagined than real, according to Kenichi Nakamura, a foreign affairs expert at Hokkaido University. "It is a symptom of economic insecurity and a lack of direction in Japan. We should remember that China has many problems. It is just that they have smarter leaders."

Tokyo accepts that Mr Clinton has to play up China's virtues to overcome political opposition to his visit in the US, but is frustrated that this leaves Japan in the role of villain. "If honest US economists looked at the Chinese situation, they would see that it is far worse than ours," said a foreign ministry source. "It seems that for the purpose of the visit, Washington is closing its eyes to the economic problems and human rights problems in China."

The source said Ms Albright would be expected to restore a sense of balance while she was in Japan to brief the government on the Clinton-Jiang summit.

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Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

WITH Richard Branson's autobiography up for serialisation, an odd alliance is formed. Richard wanted the book shared by two papers — a broadsheet for the business, and a tabloid for the grinning ape in a balloon. The Times and Sun cobbled together one bid — but hark! Who's this in the other camp? No, surely not... it's Piers Morgan's Mirror and the Telegraph, edited by that ferocious opponent of tabloid intrusiveness, Charlie Moore. "It's true, I'm afraid," says Piers. "Sometimes even I have to sacrifice my principles and deal with riff raff for the sake of the newspaper." Alas, the Charlie-Piers axis has been defeated, though it's nothing to do with the recent Mirror splash alleging that Richard's a groper. Even so, such reporting is the sort of prudence Charlie despises. Sometimes.

MICHAEL Winner calls in a state. "You realise this is a unique occasion — me ringing you?" Of course. "Well, I've been feeling furious, I had to call." Michael tells my colleague Simon Bowers that he's been advertising in the Times's "Crème de la Crème" section for staff. "They're supposed to print a box number at the bottom," he continues. "Well, they've only printed my private, ex-directory address instead." They haven't? "They have. We're threatening litigation, of course. I shall write to the editor and tell him to put those responsible against the wall and shoot them."

AFTER much speculation, an announcement is imminent about the future of Stuart Proffitt, the HarperCollins editor who resigned over Murdoch's interference in Chris Patten's book on China. Two months ago, he was thought likely to become head of Penguin Press, the group's academic division, but he said no and the job went to one Andrew Rosenheim instead. What a stroke of luck that he held out for something better: his new job, we gather, will be as Mr Rosenheim's deputy. We look forward to the valedictory press release, especially the expression of delight from Penguin MD Anthony Forbes Watson, who recently lauded that Mr Proffitt would join the firm over his dead body.

REVIEWS for my friend Andrew Lloyd-Webber's fine new musical *Whistle Down The Wind* are mixed. Some love it, but the Telegraph (for whom Andrew is restaurant critic) is kind. So is the Times, where Benedict Nightingale writes that, although unimpressed when he saw it in Washington in 1996, he is now a fan. In the last two years, the reformed show has acquired not only new songs but also a new musical director, Christopher Nightingale. We ring Benedict to ask the obvious: "You're a fan? What does she want?" "Right, thanks very much. A lengthy pause. "Okay."

MEANWHILE, the Sun expresses surprise at a phone-in on Tuesday, with 97 pro-Cookie calls in 15 minutes. Clare Short had 16 supporters and Gordon Brown just 22, and while Mo Mowlam came second with 64. But who's this way out in front, with more pro votes than the other nine combined? Well, well, it's Robin Cook! After much bad publicity, Cookie is five times more popular than the beloved Mo — especially at lunchtime! The Sun mentions "an amazing surge of support" at about 1pm on Tuesday, with 97 pro-Cookie calls in 15 minutes.

MICHAEL Winner rings back. "Simon, people are ringing my doorbell," he wails. "They're ringing my doorbell. It's ridiculous. I've already got a stalker." You've told? What does she want? "Well, you know, she says we had an affair in a café on Hampstead High St. and so on. Then she said she was madly in love with me, then she hated me and wanted to kill me. Now she loves Mr Fraser." We hope you weren't too rude to your callers today. "Luckily, Mr Fraser was here and he told them firmly 'please, you cannot come to the door.'" And with that he is gone. For now.



Ulster's chance to demonstrate that the future is orange and green

Decca Aitkenhead



WHEN Betty Boothroyd banned papers in the House of Commons, she added, with a twinkle, that she had "no objection to devices which vibrate". Easy laughs are the kind of luxury you can afford when you've got several centuries of history under your wing, and the new Northern Ireland Assembly could have done with a bit of history on Wednesday. As the presiding officer stood up to lay down some ground rules of his own, he had all the solemn diligence of a virgin. Vibrating papers were granted permission, but the careless confidence of Westminster would have to wait a while.

There was a touching gaucheness throughout the opening scenes at Stormont. Members couldn't always remember how to address the Speaker: was he Mr Presiding Officer or Mr Chairman? No one had yet decided how they would refer to each other's titles. Could you call Sinn Féin "IRA/Sinn Féin", or was that no longer acceptable? Who would be allowed to speak, and when? Outside in the sunshine, beyond the media tents, a muddy cesspool of cars was parked all over the grass, more like Glastonbury than a legislative assembly.

Proceedings at Stormont weren't slick, and they were all the more impressive for it. David Trimble could be forgiven for declining to describe the occasion as "historic", previous historic occasions in the province having had a tendency to backfire. But media commentators were less sparing with the term, and they, too, could be forgiven, for the spectacle of men like Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley sitting down in the same elected chamber was as remarkable as it was affecting. In their very uncertainty, in

their cautious search for new procedures, the assembly's members were acting out the transition from old clichés towards something quite new. As the day wore on, it was hard to resist the hope that a genuine change was taking place in Northern Ireland.

It would have been considerably easier, however, were it not for events taking place less than 30 miles away. As dusk fell, army Land Rovers were lining the mouth of the Gavaragh Road, soldiers stationed on bridges with rifles at their shoulders. Fleets of RUC vehicles were driving into town: officers were blocking off the main street. Young men in purple uniforms were gathering on street corners, pulling lambs and snatching a last flag. While a new Northern Ireland was inching its way into life at Stormont, the old one was still banging the drums in Portadown.

Every loyalist bandstand parading that Wednesday night had the same thing to say about Drumcree. Why shouldn't they march down the Gavaragh Road on Sunday? It's the Queen's Highway, isn't it? If the police won't let them, they'll stand there until they do. The nationalist residents should let them through, or there'll be trouble. The country will be wrecked. The republicans are running the country now, but we'll see. Trimble is a traitor. In fact, Trimble should be burnt on that bonfire over there. Ever speak to anyone who lives on the Gavaragh Road? No way. Never. And so on.

Drumcree contains perhaps every disastrous ingredient an Ulster dispute could encompass. Portadown is a ferociously loyalist town, home to the murdered loyalist terrorist Billy Wright, and to the

LVF. It voted overwhelmingly No in the referendum, and local Orangemen refuse to recognise the Parades Commission and its re-routing of the march away from the Gavaragh Road.

The Gavaragh Road area is the town's sole nationalist enclave; Catholics mix little with Protestants in the town, and even less since one was shot dead by terrorists just a couple of months ago. Suspicion among the nationalist community towards the RUC is acute, following the police decision to allow the march down the Gavaragh Road in previous years. They aren't helped by claims that RUC officers stood by and watched when a Catholic was kicked to death in the town last year.

WHERE that not enough, it was at Drumcree two years ago that David Trimble's political status as an Orangeman and leader was secured, when he joined the stand-off and road blocks which brought Ulster close to anarchy. He is the MP for Portadown, reviled by nationalist constituents for refusing even to meet the Gavaragh Road residents, and now by his loyalist constituents, for signing the Good Friday agreement. And now, with two days to go until the march, he is First Minister of Northern Ireland. A more complex and potentially disastrous set of circumstances would be hard to imagine.

By yesterday, David Trimble had appealed in an open letter to the Gavaragh residents to allow the march to make its way through. "Twenty minutes of tolerance," he wrote, "is a small price to pay for peace, and the chance to transform community relations." Given that the Orange Order is threatening a

365-day stand-off if need be, and is mobilising members at the weekend to stretch security forces to their limit, the possibility of violence is real. On Wednesday night, arson attacks were carried out on 10 Catholic churches.

Drumcree places David Trimble in an extremely uncomfortable position, but you might say he also has a point. How can a quick march down one road be so important to nationalists that they would rather see Ulster descend once again into violence than let it happen? There is surely now too much to lose. A gesture of generosity on their part would locate the nationalists in the moral high ground, give Sinn Féin's new image a saintly glow, and by Sunday night the entire affair would be over.

That remains the residents' prerogative, but they are entitled not to exercise it. If they choose not to, there must be no repeat of last year's last-minute decision by the secretary of state to allow the march through. Northern Ireland is no longer the place it was last year; the Parades Commission has ruled that a march down a street where it is not welcome is no longer acceptable, and that decision is a fundamental landmark which must be upheld.

The only "tradition" Orangemen want to celebrate on the Gavaragh Road is their assertion of dominance over a minority. On Wednesday, referring to Sinn Féin, Trimble told the assembly: "We have never said that because someone has a past, they can't have a future. We have always acknowledged the possibility that people can change." He might recall his own words as he thinks now about his own history at Drumcree, and his future as Northern Ireland's First Minister.

A goal for America

Bill Buford



WHY do we watch the sports that we do and what do they tell us about ourselves? It's a cruel topic just now. I appreciate, in the aftermath of England's exit from the World Cup, (why did anyone watch that — unless, on some profound level, we enjoy pain?) But imagine what it would be like if you supported the United States? If you weren't following the US side, you should know that, of the 32 national teams which qualified for the finals of the World Cup, the US had the distinction of coming last. It won nothing. In three matches, it scored one goal, and that, at least, was during the one game which Americans back home made a point of watching: the game against Iran. The Iranians, alas, scored two goals. The sport, which has long been said to be on the verge of capturing the autistic American imagination, failed, yet again.

Or has it? The irony is that Americans appeared genuinely to have toyed with the idea of abandoning their devotion to relentless gratification (a feature of all point-scoring, touchdown or home-run dominated American sports) and, for two weeks, looked on with envy at the rest of the world's capacity to find so much pleasure in the pain of football. Mexico's defeat by the Germans was the front-page story in the Los Angeles Times this week; Scotland's defeat by Brazil, at the outset, was the front-page story in the New York Times. Losing — that's the news!

THE interest is not unrelated to a dissatisfaction with the country's own national sport, American football. The game is probably the most regimented of all sports — the players, clad in heavy uniforms and helmets, are virtually identical to look at, and improvisation is discouraged, to such an extent that today quarterbacks call plays from the huddle, rather than from the field. It has always been a game of mysteries that millions crowd into football stadiums or huddle in front of their televisions or gather in pubs, week after week, in order to subject themselves to some of the most emotionally engaging theatre of our time. And yet it is so rarely examined. And now, this curious change in what seems like the very culture of the United States. Yes, the US team was a flop. But something has occurred. It seems unlikely that the US will have a World Cup winner by the year 2010 (a forecast made by America's football authorities). But a new generation is going to produce a contender.

where there because they felt they ought to be, because it was what their fathers did, or because it was what their fathers thought they should have done, or because it was the American way. Football, I grew up hearing, prepares you for life: it trains you to be an American.

At my school, before you were considered, your head was shaved — the no-nonsense military look. A first batch was then eliminated through a curious gladiator competition. A board was set down on the grass — about 20 feet in length. At one end stood a player from last year's team. At the other end stood a rookie: someone trying out for the first time. The idea was this. At the whistle, the two lads ran down the length of the board, straddling it, until they collided, head to head. If you succeeded in head-butting him backwards and knocking the other end of the board, you were considered for the team. If not, not: you went home and started growing out your hair. Beat or be beaten. Hit or else be hit. I played the game. I played it for years, with the result that, even now, the powerful green smell of recently cut summer grass invades distasteful memories of discipline and preposterous tests of aggression.

And then in the last five years something happened. The kids took up soccer. The fact is known to those who follow the game — there are nearly 15 million people playing soccer in the United States. What isn't known is that, in turn, American football has collapsed. At my school, 50 people tried out for the team last year. John Seabrook, a colleague at the New Yorker, observes how Kennedy High School in the Bronx — winners of the state championship — no longer have a playing field: it has been con-

A new generation will produce a US contender for the World Cup

demned, and no one has the interest to repair it. In another New York league — there are eight schools in the league — four have withdrawn: they don't have enough people to make a team.

Why do people watch sport? It has always been one of the mysteries that millions crowd into football stadiums or huddle in front of their televisions or gather in pubs, week after week, in order to subject themselves to some of the most emotionally engaging theatre of our time. And yet it is so rarely examined. And now, this curious change in what seems like the very culture of the United States. Yes, the US team was a flop. But something has occurred. It seems unlikely that the US will have a World Cup winner by the year 2010 (a forecast made by America's football authorities). But a new generation is going to produce a contender.

As all its left-wingers are weeded out, New Labour loses support in Scotland. Perhaps it's no coincidence

The purge is on

Mark Seddon

SCOTLAND calling! Scotland calling! Is anyone listening south of the border? This week's ICM poll for the Scotsman showed the Scottish Nationalists still neck and neck with Labour at 40 per cent in voting intention for the Holyrood parliament next year.

Would that the sudden post-devolution surge for the SNP were enough, but the affable Scottish secretary Donald Dewar finds himself buffeted on so many fronts that he risks becoming a scapegoat for much that was not of his own making. SNP leader Alex Salmond emerged as the most popular choice for First Minister in the same poll, by 42-37 per cent.

Scotland is heartland Labour territory, its traditions more socialist than

the venerable Labourism of northern England. Yet while Labour may have delivered on devolution, the party is receiving little gratitude from those who voted in such droves for the party barely a year ago. It is true that a majority still declares for Labour for future elections to Westminster, but a majority of Scots has decided that the Edinburgh parliament matters more. Opinions are divided as to the cause of the turn of events. In the handful of laudable pieces that have appeared in the London papers, you may take your pick: the Scots are either rebellious by nature or the SNP is the depository for protest votes.

There have been precious few attempts to ask why Labour is on the defensive. That task is left to the notoriously off-message Scottish press, which makes for a grim daily read for every

Labour supporter. "Blair risks backlash on move to cut MSPs", "Blair's pact with Murdoch" and "Unsettling the handbag" — in tones the Scotsman, the latter headline an unflattering, and not entirely fair, comment on the Prime Minister's stewardship of the

Scots appear to prefer the party of John Smith and, yes, Keir Hardie

European presidency. And from the Glasgow Herald: "Rejects given legal lifeline." The "rejects" to whom the Herald refers — those many and varied Labour MPs who have not made it past a vetting panel to

selection to stand for the Scottish parliament — have a QC's opinion that the whole process was "fundamentally flawed" and "open to legal challenge. For a better example of Scottish Labour's current propensity for self-immolation, look no further.

Famously, Murray Elder — a former adviser to John Smith — and three prominent Scottish MPs, Michael Connarty, Dennis Canavan and Ian Davidson, were judged not to be up to scratch by the Scottish panel which is chaired by Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Labour MP, Rosemary McKenna. The latter two have since returned to their constituency parties in order to seek a vote of confidence from the members. After all, they ask, if we are good enough for Westminster, why not Edinburgh? The MPs are not alone: many prominent women from

Scottish public life have been winnowed out, and Scotland's race equality commissioner, Dr Moussa Jomeh, has been quoted as saying that "a political voice for the ethnic minority has also been lost". Ms McKenna and her supporters reply that the "selection procedure is more democratic than any other party's" and that "gender balance has been pursued because the Scottish Labour party voted for it". It is their belief that with the large number of applicants, some were bound to be disappointed.

Yet the casualty list is too extensive, the charge of blatant cronyism so precise and corrosive, to avoid the conclusion that a purge is on. And many Labour MPs at Westminster now fear the Scottish selection system is a dry run for the selection of exclusively on-message candidates for the



next general election. Scottish Labour, thus far untamed, yet paradoxically more out of favour with the electors. Tony Blair and New Labour may currently enjoy sky high opinion polls in England, but the Scots appear to prefer the Labour Party of John Smith and, yes, Keir Hardie. Famously resistant to Thatcherism, some appear willing to accept the SNP's view that New Labour is simply a derivative of that old despised beast. Such opportunism on SNP leader's Alex Salmond's behalf would be laughable had not his party stolen some of Labour's better clothes and positioned itself to the left of New Labour. If Scotland is not to become the thin end of the wedge for the Government, Labour needs to wake up.

Mark Seddon is editor of Tribune

مكتبة الأمل

The Guardian
Friday July 3 1998
Edition Number 47219
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Tel No: 0171-278 2332
Fax No: 0171-837 4530
E-mail: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk

'Can the rest of us play the Lottery under Covent Garden rules?'
Stephen Hardy, Letters

Marching on Drumcree

Can peace hit Garvaghy?

YESTERDAY'S DESECRATION of Catholic churches by mindless arsonists linked to the Loyalist Volunteer Force has cast another shadow over Northern Ireland just as it was celebrating the success of the first sitting of its new Assembly. That, of course, was one of the reasons the terrorists struck. The other was to create more mayhem ahead of Sunday's banned Orange march at Drumcree. Orangemen remain intent on marching down the nationalist Garvaghy Road despite the Parades Commission's ban on their traditional return journey into Portadown where many of the LVF live. Yesterday's heinous crimes provided a sharp reminder of what the province could so easily relapse into. But the virtually unanimous condemnation of the arson attacks — from Sinn Féin to Dr Ian Paisley — are also a timely reminder that the overwhelming consensus is firmly against a return to the past. That is what must be built on. The urgent question now is whether the encouraging signs of co-operation during the first day of the Assembly can be translated into a force for change at the grassroots to defuse the Drumcree time bomb ticking away in the background.

If some of the increasingly impressive statesmanship displayed by David Trimble could rub off on Ian Paisley there would be more grounds for hope. Dr Paisley endlessly replays his Jurassic gramophone record of invective, while Mr Trimble continues his journey from immovable hardliner to First

Minister required to govern for everyone. He has achieved this remarkable political shift at the expense of alienating the majority of his own MPs at Westminster and hardliners in his own constituency, which includes Drumcree. Mr Trimble hasn't yet summoned up enough courage to talk to the citizens affected by the march through the Garvaghy Road. Lack of communication between the two sides was one of the reasons the Parades Commission banned the march.

Mr Trimble is now the First Minister pledged to govern for everyone, across the sectarian divide. He showed considerable political courage in going into the Maze to talk to paramilitaries. Could he not use the legitimacy of the 71 per cent of votes cast in favour of the peace process to ease the path of reconciliation at Drumcree? He has already written to residents so taking the extra step of talking to them is not so great as it might seem.

There are still tested ways in which a compromise can be reached — like the two communities agreeing to allow Orangemen to have a reduced, silent walk down the fated road while Catholics hold their peace. But this would only be a quick-fix until the next crisis. Is it too idealistic to wonder why the spirit of progress reflected in the Assembly couldn't take a day trip to Drumcree? Why can't the two communities organise some kind of joint march or allow their leaders to come together — or at least not far apart — to prove, as Mr Trimble nobly said in the Assembly, that the future doesn't have to be like the past. It doesn't have to be. The context in which Mr Trimble made those remarks was when he gave the benefit of the doubt to those in the Assembly on both sides of Ulster's divide with historic links to the paramilitaries. But it has equal relevance to the Gar-

vaghy Road. Tactically it might be wise for the Orangemen to swallow the considered verdict of the Parades Commission and divert their march. But sooner or later Northern Ireland must accept that people have the right to celebrate their differing histories in a celebratory not confrontational way.

And if it can be sooner rather than later then why can't "sooner" begin this weekend?

Healthy returns

Blair's birthday promises

IT WAS A big occasion — and it produced one of his best speeches. Almost 4,000 national and international delegates were present to hear the Prime Minister address the NHS 50th anniversary conference, sponsored by the Guardian. There were three challenges facing Tony Blair, providing the 1 million workers in the NHS with a vision; acknowledging defects as well as successes; and setting out clear solutions to current problems.

The first was delivered with commitment and pride. Labour's task is to restore the country's confidence in the service. It is not just a matter of "saving" it, it must be modernised and prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. Old values of co-operation and partnership would be restored but the service would also have to change. Tribute was rightly paid to the successes of Britain's most popular institution but its defects were not ignored: wide variations in standards, inadequate systems for assessing clinical and cost-effectiveness of treatment, no proper medical audit, poor use of IT and inadequate arrangements for spreading good practice.

What is Labour's NHS solution? The Government has sensible plans for evaluating new treatments, for monitoring current provision, and for the daunting task of improving the performance of all parts of the NHS. There will be a modernisation fund and a chance for GPs and hospitals to become "beacons of excellence". All are needed if standards are to be raised and gaps narrowed. Sensibly, the new money will be linked to readiness to change.

His biggest birthday present, however, concerned cash. First came acknowledgement that his government had underfunded the NHS since the election, along with an unqualified commitment to real increases in funding not just next year, or even the next three, but "sustainable year on year increases for the foreseeable future". Such an unequivocal pledge from a prime minister who takes particular pride in not breaking promises is golden news on a golden anniversary. But it has consequences. Anything less than £10 billion extra over the next three years when the comprehensive spending review is published will be met with outrage.

with consequences for policy. Ask those BBC apparatchiks worried by Scots' impatience at the pretensions of pan-British broadcasting. Ask anyone seriously interested in film — our own Derek Malcolm for a start — about how much is missed because distribution arteries are so clogged by (American) visual clutter.

Britain, patently, is not France, beleaguered in a diminishingly Francophone world. But we can surely understand the anxieties of, say, Caribbean and Canadian who feel smothered by the sheer prevalence of American programming in their neighbourhoods. That is why the presence of an arts minister at this week's Ottawa conference convened by federal heritage minister Sheila Copps was right and proper. Mark Fisher need not feel he is selling the Blairite pass by talking to people who might, just might, consider the Disney Corp. let alone Rupert Murdoch's Fox, an all-too-heavy cloud on their cultural horizons.

Diversity is a positive value. Hollywood is cheap and plentiful, but home-grown product adds to the mix and may help secure identity in a fissionary world. A soap reflecting local/national concerns may well be worth 10 imported series. Hollywood product usually wins audiences because it is well-crafted and rides the cultural cutting edge. But it may also get the numbers because of economies of scale, distribution deals and political treaties of the kind in which Rupert Murdoch specialises. If, like the Canadians and Mexicans, you live next door to a giant you may have grounds for worry if all your population is watching is Oprah or ER. That isn't a justification for protectionism. But we live in an age when the nostrums of the liberal-individualist eighties are under review. Cultural anxiety, inspired by Hollywood, may even be an index of health.

Letters to the Editor

Voices raised in protest

THE most disturbing part of Richard Byrne's report (Royal Opera House, July 1) is that Covent Garden has no business plan for the reopened Opera House. How can their Lottery bid have got approval unless the assessors had turned a blind eye? My experience with other bids to Lottery boards has always been that the forward business plan is an absolute prerequisite, otherwise you stand no chance of getting a grant. Can the rest of us play the Lottery under Covent Garden rules?

Stephen Hardy, Robertsbridge, E Sussex.

IF the yen is in trouble and Japanese banks are sinking further and further into the red, how has Nomura been able to spend some \$2.5 million buying British companies (Nomura set to bid for Tote, July 1)?

J G Owen, Caspberry.

I AM surprised the niceties of the wheelchairs' art has not been commented upon by your correspondents (Letters, June 23 and 25). Tapping wheels was only half of the job. The other part was to test the temperature of the axle box with the back of the tapping hand. Thus the tap was delivered backhand, so that after its delivery, the temperature could most easily be judged. This, of course, meant that right-handed tappers proceeded from engine to guard's van on the outside of the rake, and in the opposite direction on the nearside.

Phil Lane, Keele University.

WE do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. The Country Diary is on Page 17.

NHS: scalpels are out

RABBI Julia Neuberger (Letters, June 30) repeats a long-standing slur against GPs. In 1988, the British Medical Association represented 90 per cent of doctors; it backed a potential NHS by 90 per cent also. My late GP father was a hardline BMA representative. His alternative Health Bill was supported by the south-east area.

Opposition was mainly on two fronts: the regional boards would be operating on a non-democratic basis of self-perpetuating political stogies. Also, doctors' retirement welfare depended largely on selling the "goodwill" of their practices. Anzures in Bevan wanted to deprive doctors of what was effectively their pension. (In 1945 my father, like many GPs, was regularly not submitting bills to patients in structured circumstances.) GPs wanted the NHS, but not these injustices.

J Hope-Stimpson, Cheltenham.

IN Richard Gordon's very lively account of the NHS (The birth of an idea, June 26), it is astonishing to see Charles Hill, secretary of the BMA, placed close to Lloyd George as a pioneer of public health. He is described as "a valuable ally" of Bevan's in creating the NHS. In fact, he led violent

resistance to it. Among Hill's choicer *bon mots* was to say in 1946 that doctors were being asked to choose "between Bevan and Belsen". A much more appropriate name to honour would be Dr Christopher Addison, Lloyd George's right-hand man on health insurance in 1911, the very first Minister of Health in 1919, and Bevan's ally in getting the NHS through Cabinet in 1945.

Kenneth O Morgan, Oxon.

IN THE eyes of all other NHS workers and staff, Rabbi Neuberger is right and Dr John Chisholm, chairman of the General Medical Services Committee (Letters, July 1) is wrong. The recent announcement on Primary Care Groups are a major concession to GPs. Everyone knows that, including the authors of the BMA's press release announcing the deal "successfully negotiated" by the GMS.

Our members welcomed the NHS White Paper and have worked to ensure that Primary Care Groups (PCGs) become genuinely multi-disciplinary organisations.

Now that one profession has a veto on PCG boards and is alone able to elect the chair, our members feel deeply disappointed. They read this as

meaning that nurses and other professions other than medicine are second-class citizens. It is essential now that Dr Chisholm and his colleagues demonstrate their commitment to a publicly accountable NHS by clearing governance rules that ensure that GPs are committed to the wider health goals of PCGs.

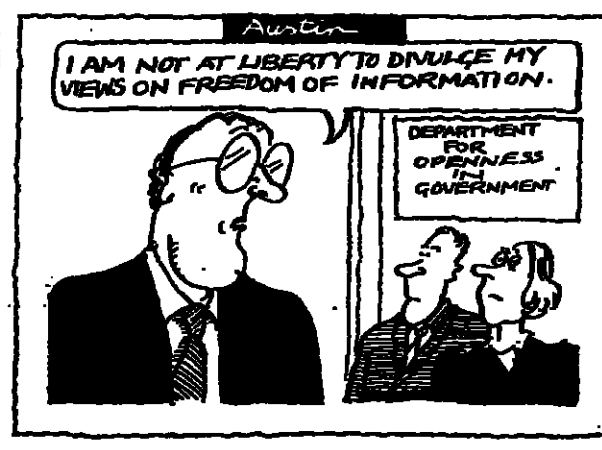
We would be delighted to join the GMS in that discussion — perhaps with Rabbi Neuberger in the chair?

Roger Kline, National Secretary (Health), MSF.

THE Government has produced a so-called management tool which is at best woolly and, from the sceptic's point of view, Machiavellian in its structure and design. Doctors fully understand the tensions Rabbi Neuberger alludes to and are desperately trying to push them into the public arena for full debate. It is the Government and its spin doctors who are trying to simplify, thereby concealing the painful realities.

I hope, as chief executive of the King's Fund, an influential think tank, that she reflects more deeply in future before rushing to print.

Dr David Rapp, London.



Shooting down penalty system

ONCE again the dreaded penalty shoot-out has come in for criticism (Letters, July 2). Lots of alternative (mostly silly) ideas have been put forward, but everyone seems to have overlooked a method which is practical and fair, but improves the quality of games as well. If a match is drawn after extra time, the winner should be the team with the better record in the tournament. The first-round results can then be taken into account when the knock-out stage is first reached.

Thereafter, goal difference in previous knock-out rounds would decide. If the match had been in use, we would have been spared the absurdity of Brazil and Nigeria's final first-round matches. Both teams would still have been going for goals, and Spain and Morocco would rightly have made it to the second round.

Alan Bamber, Painswick, Glos.

TOO many entertaining games have been spoiled by sending-off where the punishment does not seem to fit the crime. Why not introduce the "sin bin", where a bad foul would be punished by periods of 10, 20, 30 or even 40 minutes off the field? The player and team are penalised without killing off

Insane laws: an appeal on behalf of Iain Hay Gordon

IAIN Hay Gordon, now 68 and in poor health, was tried in 1982 for the murder in 1962 at Whiteabbey, Co Antrim, of Patricia Curran, the daughter of a judge. Mr Gordon was convicted under the special verdict of "guilty but insane". He spent seven years in an asylum for a crime which it can be convincingly argued he did not commit. He was released when it was established that he was sane. The Ministry for Home Affairs concluded it had no powers to hold him. But his conviction for the murder stands.

Particularly distressing is the denial to Mr Gordon of that basic human right, an appeal against conviction. It is this, as much as the treatment he received from the police and the deeply flawed confession they extracted from him, which motivates the campaign to obtain justice for him. To that end his solicitor, Margaret Harvey, and Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC have been

providing their services to him. This week there was a new and unwelcome development. The Court of Appeal for Northern Ireland has given an opinion to the effect that because Gordon was found "guilty but insane" he has no right of appeal. If, however, he had been found "not guilty by reason of insanity", his case would then have fallen within the remit of the Criminal Cases Review Commission, and be referred to a full appeal hearing.

Most reasonable people would conclude that these two verdicts convey the same meaning and both should, therefore, carry the same right of appeal. Maximum pressure should now be brought to bear on the Government to secure a change in the law to give Mr Gordon the chance to establish his innocence without any further unnecessary delay.

The Earl of Portsmouth, Basingstoke, Hampshire.

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Siemens technology has developed a new hearing system which is set to revolutionise the lives of thousands of people who previously have had difficulty hearing in noisy surroundings.

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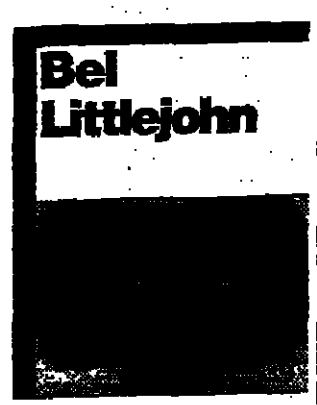
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Tributes pour in



THIS is how it happened. I'd just finished watching the BBC news. On McCaskill. "This is my last forecast," he announces. It turns out he's retiring. So I immediately think but does Tony know? I do what I always do. I ring the lovely Alastair Campbell in Number 10 and tell him, "Ian

McCaskill?" says Alastair, thoughtfully. "Humm. He's a much-loved figure. I'll tell Tony. Thanks, Bel."

The next day, my radio alarm wakes me to the Today programme, and the distinctive early-morning sound of Ian McCaskill's voice. "The whole country has listened to Ian's magnificent weather forecasts," he says, "delivered in that truly brilliant voice of his. And I know we all want to thank him from the bottom of our hearts for the great job he's done for all of us, come rain or shine."

I'm thrilled, of course I am. And while Tony's running through the rest of the day's tributes (to Geri Spice, "wishing her all the very best for the future" to Sir David English, "a great friend and a great editor" to Bob Monkhouse, "30 years at the top for an all-round family enter-

tainer"; to Oskar Schindler, "a guy whose unselfish actions quite literally knocked me backwards"; the mobile rings. It's Alastair.

"Bel" he says, "did you hear it? Tony wants you to know he's very grateful to you for alerting him about McCaskill. And, on the strength of it, he wondered..."

"Yes" I say, hopefully. "If you'd be interested in a job as his senior communications officer brackets tributes close brackets? It'd only be two days a week to start, but rising to three or four once the department really gets going. So how about it, Bel?"

And that's how it happened that I joined Tony's staff — for what is rapidly turning into a full-time job. Seeing the appointment in the media and after hearing the beautiful way in which Tony recited my speedily penned tribute to the England football squad

"the whole country is very, very proud of those guys — they put up a terrific fight and we owe them all a truly tremendous amount" a lot of readers have already expressed an interest in what exactly the job entails — so here goes!

I SPEND the first part of each morning going over the newspaper reports with a fine-tooth comb, specially on the look-out for tales of heroism, courage and what we at Number 10 call "general niceness". Take last Wednesday, the day of my England tribute, for instance. I also circled 15 other items, of which, after round-table discussion, Tony eventually paid warm-hearted tribute to seven.

First, there was the triumphant return to our screens of TV's Animal Hospital ("A truly moving programme, a great favourite of our nation," as Tony said); then there was the opening of the Diana exhibition at Althorp ("Great! Fabulous! A people's exhibition fit for the people's Princess"); a new Patrick Heron retrospective at the Tate ("On behalf of the British people, I pay tribute to lovely colours from a master craftsman at the very peak of his abilities. Smashing!"); a wonderful new tassel-dringed by Stella McCartney ("It all says about there's so much young talent out there in this country, just waiting to be tapped!"); two anniversaries — Marie Curie ("A truly remarkable woman who's influenced me in ways I never thought possible"); and Charles Darwin ("Not only a guy who's opened my eyes to the wonders of the natural world, but a great family man too"); and finally one get-well-soon to Sir Alf Ramsey ("Who's contributed so much to the game of football — a

game I myself enjoy playing with my kids whenever I can grab a spare moment"). But each day in Downing Street brings fresh groups of people to pay tribute to. Rather than build up a backlog — after all, Tony would look pretty unstatesmanlike if he were to take until next Tuesday to deliver a tribute to Robbie Williams for his rock'n' roll performance at Glastonbury last week! — we've decided to limit the daily tribute quota to a maximum of five (5) per day. Sadly, this means we are having to do some people on a bloc — the lovely, genuine people of Birmingham are due for a tribute on Saturday week, and they're sharing it with Annie Lennox, Tottenham Hotspur and all the staff at Stoke Mandeville. So for a tribute from Tony for yourself or someone dear to you, be sure to book early to avoid disappointment.

Analysis The IMF



Can Trimble
halt the march
of history?
14

One size does not fit all

A leak in the global economy has turned into a flood. **Larry Elliott and Alex Brummer** audit the plumbers

FROM the offices of the International Monetary Fund in downtown Washington DC, the ambush of the Thai baht by currency speculators a year ago this week looked like one of those brief but violent tropical storms. That great edifice, globalisation, had sprung a leak, but the problem was minor, mere running repairs.

Twelve months later, things look rather different. No longer is it a case of damp in the attic, while rooms are deep in rising flood waters.

Amid all the soul-searching, the IMF — one of the main architects of the new world order — has come under rigorous scrutiny. A crisis that started in Thailand has affected Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, India, Russia, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. Nobody knows for sure which country will be next in the firing line.

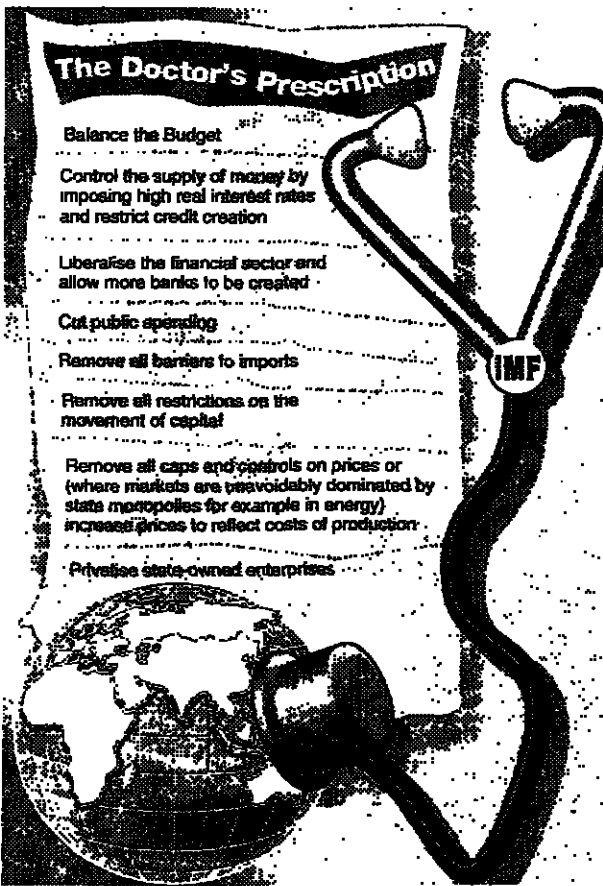
The IMF has come under fire from economists of right, left and centre. Nobel laureate Milton Friedman led the charge from the right. He accused the IMF of being interventionist, its meddling with the invisible hand of the free market prevent economies from correcting themselves.

From the economics mainstream came the charge that the IMF made a series of bad decisions. Reacting to its closure of Indonesian banks last autumn the Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs said: "Instead of dousing the fire, the IMF in effect screamed fire in the theatre" (1).

From the left, two lines of attack. First, the IMF got it wrong about globalisation and, second, that it is in cahoots with the US Treasury to force Asian countries to adopt one-size-fits-all American capitalism. The big currency devaluations have made Asian assets cheap, while moves to secure complete liberalisation of capital will make it child's play for American companies to pick up viable companies at bargain basement prices.

Faced with these criticisms, the Fund fought back. In the Financial Times earlier this year, the IMF's managing director, Michel Camdessus was asked why it had imposed its same old belt-tightening adjustment programmes on Thailand, Indonesia and Korea — programmes that were quite inappropriate to their present needs (2).

"Mr Camdessus became indignant. The new agreements represented a marked departure from the IMF's traditional approach. They were built not on a set of austerity measures, but rather on far-reaching structural reforms to strengthen financial systems, increase transparency, open



markets and restore market confidence." These are not universally held views, even within the IMF. Joseph Stiglitz, chief economist of the World Bank, has given voice to the misgivings of the dissidents. At the start of this year, he made his feelings about the IMF's austerity packages plain enough when he argued that "you don't want to push these countries into severe recession. One ought to focus on... things that caused the crisis, not on things that make it more difficult to deal with" (3). The IMF — not used to having its behaviour challenged — snapped back. Stiglitz would not be silenced (4). One by one, he laid into the sacred cows of the IMF. First, the cavalier way in which the emphasis on macro-economic stability ignored growth and jobs. Then there was the Camdessus argument that the need to restore confidence to the currency necessitated high interest rates. "Are measures that weaken the economy, especially the financial system, likely to restore confidence?" There was more. Macro-economic policy needed to be expanded beyond "a single-minded focus on inflation and budget deficits; the set of policies that underlay the Washington consensus are not sufficient for macro-

economic stability or long-term development." The IMF is not used to such scorn. It has long enjoyed the reputation of a lean and focused bureaucracy with the world's best economic and financial staff. The Fund's view has been that the economy of one country is very much like any other and that by applying its rational, neo-liberal economic model, it could restore a measure of economic stability. Created at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire the IMF's remit was at first a narrow one. It was the world's central bank, lender of the last resort to member countries. Most of its clients were advanced industrial countries such as Britain and the system worked reasonably well, fixed exchange rates making it relatively easy to police. All that changed in 1972 when President Nixon uncoupled the dollar from gold.

The new world was rather different, primarily because the end of fixed rates brought new opportunities for speculators to take on the weak links in the financial system. The famed "Gnomes of Zurich" who undid the Wilson government in 1967 were now joined by fellow spirits in financial markets from New York to Tokyo, with relatively large

capital sums at their disposal. Forced British and American borrowings from the Fund in the late 1970s hurt; the richer industrial countries would at all costs avoid similar humiliation. The IMF would still supervise their economies, but capital shortages would be met by borrowing from the increasingly free and open private sector capital markets. But just as there was talk that the IMF might have outlived its usefulness, the Mexican crisis broke. In 1982 the Mexican government reneged on its debts with private sector banks precipitating a crisis across Latin America, which threatened the Western banking system. The IMF stepped in as lender of the last resort and found itself a new role. No longer banker to the industrial countries it discovered a global clientele among the developing countries. Instead of making short-term bridging loans it was in for the long haul.

When the Berlin Wall came down and the former Soviet Union and its satellites aspired to capitalism the Fund acquired almost two dozen new clients. Despite its doctrine of fiscal austerity it added hundreds of new economists to its staff, doubled the size of its Washington HQ and increased its budget to \$507 million in the 1997-8 financial year. But if it had grown in size its lending programmes and approach to member countries remained the same. Its operations were surrounded in secrecy, its advice to governments private, its focus fiscal deficits, monetary policy and inflation — fundamental macro-economic reform. Even before the Fund started throwing its weight around in Asia, it was not short of critics. Robert Wade and Frank Veneroso argued that Asian economies were different from those the IMF usually deals with. They had high levels of saving re-cycled as loans to corporations; companies are closely linked with governments (5). "Because of this difference, IMF 'austerity' and 'financial liberalisation' will have higher costs and smaller benefits in Asia than elsewhere. The slowdown of the IMF's packages for Thailand, Indonesia and Korea to revive confidence reflects both their imposition of impossibly far-reaching institutional liberal-

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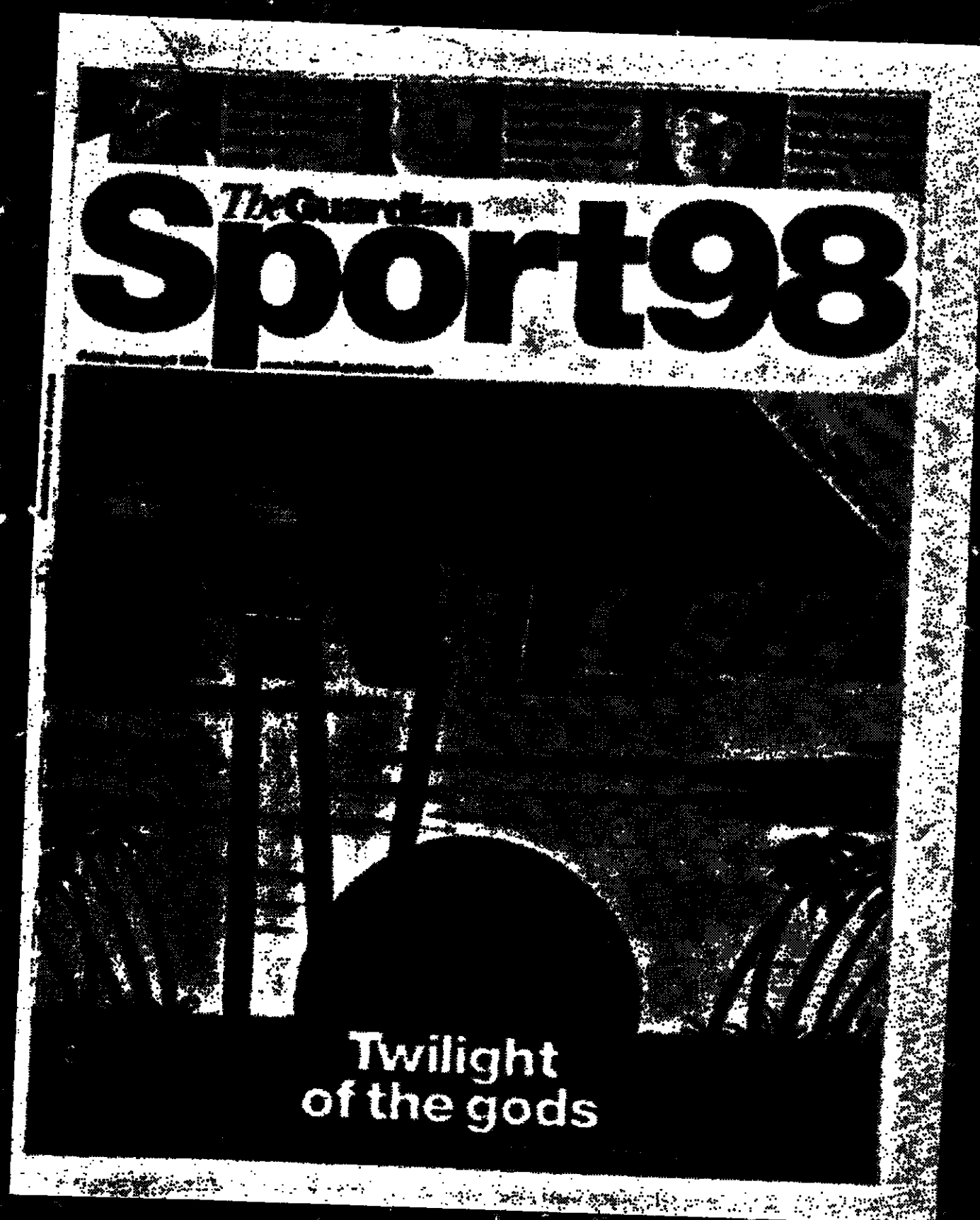
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MPs carpet Prudential for 'cheating its customers'

Rupert Jones

PRUIDENTIAL, Britain's biggest insurer, was yesterday accused of cheating its customers, misleading MPs and trying to make excuses for the part it played in the pensions mis-selling scandal.

At a heated Treasury select committee hearing, evidence given by the company's former chief executive, Mick Newmarch, was described by one MP as "the biggest load of bullshit" ever heard by a select committee.

The broadside came hours after the insurer disclosed that the estimated total cost of compensating customers has been increased to £1.1 billion — almost three times its original prediction.

MPs also condemned what

they saw as a decision to make customers pay for mis-selling by taking money from its long-term fund.

Sir Peter Davis, Prudential's chief executive, gave evidence to the inquiry into the scandal, which may have affected up to 2.4 million people between 1989 and 1994. Many are still out of pocket after being advised to opt out of company pension schemes and take out personal plans.

Forty-one companies have been "named and shamed" for their role in the affair. Prudential had more mis-selling cases than any other — more than 70,000 — and in October 1997 was blasted by the financial regulator for a series of failures in its handling of the mis-selling review.

During the hearing Labour MP Brian Sedgmore subjected Sir Peter to a withering attack, highlighting evidence

'The biggest load of bullshit any select committee has ever heard'

Labour MP Brian Sedgmore attacking the Prudential



the company of "cheating customers". Sir Peter was then lambasted by another MP for making "extraordinary excuses" after he indicated that the government also played a role in the affair.

Sir Peter told the inquiry: "We were put under a lot of pressure by government to sell pensions. If you were to look at our report in 1987, we had considerable doubts about personal pensions." Pressure took the form of "encouragement for us to look at being more active in the sale of pensions."

The company was also taken to task for making its customers foot the compensation bill — a charge denied by the chief executive. Prudential is taking the £1.1 billion from the £13 billion of capital in its long-term fund.

Sir Peter denied that this was policyholders' money, and said the decision would have no impact on them. The charge to the long-term fund was normal practice, and consistent with Treasury guidelines, he added.

However, "in the unlikely

event" that the decision does affect the company's ability to pay bonuses to its policyholders, the Prudential will make a contribution from shareholder funds.

Labour MP Charles Clarke said it seemed "unfair" that the costs of mis-selling were primarily being borne by policyholders.

Many people would be very disappointed there was no acknowledgement that it was shareholders who should pay, he added.

A spokesman said later it was "very difficult" for Sir Peter to handle those sorts of questions when he was not with the company at the time.

He joined in 1986. Commenting on the criticisms levelled at Mr Newmarch, the spokesman added: "Mick clearly genuinely believed what he told the committee, but the information was bad."

Notebook

New Swiss bank stays in neutral



Alex Brummer

THERE must be better ways to consummate a merger than the regulatory upsurge which has greeted the final coming together of Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation as new UBS.

Just days after the deal was completed at the weekend, Swiss authorities have castigated old UBS for running up \$412 million (\$248 million) of derivatives losses last year.

The Swiss authorities cited individual mistakes and deficiencies in the company's risk controls for the losses, most of which took place in Asia as a result of a gamble on Japanese convertible bonds. It is still possible that if Japanese shares were to fall further, not unlikely despite the rally of the last few days, that the loss could become even bigger. While the top executive at old UBS, Mathis Caballavetta — now chairman of the new company — has been exonerated, the authorities say other, unnamed, individuals were responsible for the losses.

In 1997 the head of equity derivatives, Remy Goldstein, and several others were dismissed amid allegations of involvement in the incident.

There was some expectation that the UBS problems might dissuade SBC from going ahead with the UBS deal, in which SBC management gained the upper hand. But that did not happen, and the new group will be the largest fund manager in the world.

It did have hopes of establishing itself as the leading European investment banking operation in the US, but may still be possible, but the legacy of old UBS's past links with the Nazis threatens to halt its progress in the US.

The commission, representing US financial officials in the negotiations with the Swiss, has decided to lift its moratorium on sanctions against the Swiss banks, after failing to break an impasse on levels of compensation for Holocaust victims.

The risk for new UBS is that it will be prevented from pressing ahead with US expansion. Bank regulators in California, New York City and New Jersey — three critical banking markets — have indicated that UBS and the other Swiss banks will be isolated until assets are returned to survivors.

This is not the start that UBS/SBC Warburg may have hoped for in its battle to take on the Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch & Co. on their home turf.

Nomura form

DESPITE Nomura's claim, there is nothing at all "absurd" in the authoritative report on these

pages that the finance house Nomura is evaluating a bid for the Tote. It would be surprising if Guy Hands, the financial innovator behind the concept of securitised buy-outs, had not run his slide-rule over the Tote — even if the Government has yet to spell out details of the proposed sale.

The Tote operates in territory in which Nomura has a wealth of form. It has already snapped up the William Hill chain of betting shops, so it has expertise in this part of the gaming industry.

It has done well in the past by refining former government assets, from defence housing to railway rolling-stock, companies by stripping in some investment and issuing securities against the earning power and assets involved.

Nomura's protest that no public information has been made available by the Tote is disingenuous. First, the Chancellor in his fiscal strategy speech to the Commons on June 11 made it clear that the Government intends to "extend the existing public-private partnership in the Tote into a broader partnership with the public sector".

Second, some element of Tote privatisation is required if the medium-term fiscal strategy — including an assumption of privatisations — is to work.

Third, any organisation, Nomura included, can scrutinise the published accounts of the Tote's turnover, income flows and assets as a preliminary to gaining fuller information at the time of privatisation.

Even if the Nomura board were eventually to decide that the Tote were a step too far, it would be daft for Mr Hands not to take a look.

Prudential fire

BRIAN Sedgmore, a former director of the Bank of England for as long as can be remembered, has found a new target in the Prudential. Using unparliamentary language he accused the Prudential and its chief executive, Peter Davis, of giving the committee "a right load of bullshit" over testimony to the Treasury Select Committee on the pensions mis-selling scandal.

This is rather unfair on Sir Peter. Inasmuch as the mis-selling took place before the Pru was even a glint in his eye.

Sir Peter has in fact moved with some rapidity to make available compensation, just raised to £1.1 billion in all, and to clean up the mess of the Life business by taking full control of operations.

Where the committee may have a point is in suggesting that policyholders could suffer as a result of the mistakes of management, even if the cash is drawn from "orphan funds" valued at up to £13 billion.

Ownership of this resource has never been clearly established. Some of the funds could, in principle, belong to generations of policyholders who will now see their pot of gold diminished.

Offshore rig chiefs 'should be held liable for deaths'

Colin Weston

EXECUTIVES in the £220 billion a year offshore oil and gas industry should be held liable for corporate killing to ensure that safety standards are improved, says an independent report published today.

The call for a change in the law, forcing companies to make directors to be held legally responsible for the safety record of their business, comes before the tenth anniversary on Monday of Britain's biggest industrial disaster, the Piper Alpha tragedy, which killed 167 workers.

The report says at least another 50 workers have been killed offshore since then, despite the 106 safety recommendations made by Lord Cullen's inquiry into the disaster. "It is difficult to identify significant safety improvements. The UK offshore industry has ignored one of the principal recommendations by excluding the workforce from any part in making the industry safer," it says.

Charles Woolfson, an academic expert in industrial relations at Glasgow University and author of the report, warns that the oil and gas industry's initiative to improve safety by 50 per cent over the coming three years will fail "without a completely fresh look at the issue of workplace involvement".

He alleges that the UK offshore industry is anti-union and hostile to regulation by state authorities, unlike the Norwegian, and claims that inaccurate statistics could be helping oil companies to disguise the real level of accidents.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.82	Germany 2.833	Malaysia 0.869	Singapore 2.74
Austria 2.83	Greece 0.835	Malta 0.879	South Africa 2.50
Belgium 0.81	Hong Kong 12.50	Netherlands 2.266	Spain 24.78
Canada 2.366	India 70.01	New Zealand 2.13	Sweden 12.11
Cyprus 0.81	Indonesia 1.589	Portugal 22.54	Switzerland 2.47
Denmark 11.26	Israel 6.06	Saudi Arabia 8.12	Turkey 427.530
Finland 0.816	Italy 2.902	USA 1.9145	
France 9.85			

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GEC aims to buy into US arms sector

David Gow

THE new-look GEC is planning a multi-billion-pound acquisition in the American defence industry and considering further disposals which may include submarine maker VSEL and warship builder Yarrow.

Lord Simpson, GEC's managing director, said he had offered to take over parts of Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman to help the US firms get regulatory approval for their planned merger.

Pointing to GEC's 25 billion war chest, he said yesterday the acquisition he is seeking would dwarf the \$280 million the company paid this year for Tracor, a Texas-based defence electronics firm.

Reporting a 7 per cent rise in annual pre-tax profits to £1.08 billion and a new share buy-back scheme worth up to £356 million, he said GEC saw the best prospects for strategic growth in using its cash mountain for acquisitions in the three core businesses of defence electronics, telecoms and industrial electronics.

But Lord Simpson, who has overseen disposals of more than £1.2 billion since he replaced Lord Weinstock in September 1996, said further divestments might be on the way.

These may include domestic appliances, dominated by the Hotpoint range of washers and co-owned with General Electric of the US, and, further into the future, VSEL, based in Barrow, and Yarrow, on the Clyde. "We are not metal-bashers but providers of intelligent electronic solu-

tions," said John Mayo, finance director.

Lord Simpson said the best prospects for growth, particularly in defence electronics, were across the Atlantic rather than in Europe. He seemed to rule out the long-mooted merger with rival British Aerospace.

Talks between the two, he said, had indicated savings of £150 million through a merger. But these were insufficient to divert GEC from its independent course of promoting shareholder value and turning itself into a "hi-tech, high-margin, high-growth" company.

GEC has been linked with various French defence groups, notably in missiles, in promoting European consolidation. While saying it would be foolish to choose between the US and Europe, Lord Simpson added that his degree of optimism about breaking into the French market "is not particularly high".

His offer to help Lockheed and Northrop went direct to both companies' chairmen who are trying to rescue their merger by agreeing on joint disposals before a case brought against them by the US Justice Department is heard on September 8. "We have indicated to both companies we stand ready to help them," Lord Simpson said.

Mr Mayo pointed out that GEC had been on the US government's "black" programme (cleared for work on secret defence projects) for 15 years and was poised to exploit this through its takeover of Tracor and its soon-to-be-completed joint venture with Alenia, the Italian defence group which has strong American links.

Asian jewel up for grabs



Cathay Pacific shows its local influence with a huge 'blimp' which flies above hundreds of guests gathered in the departure hall at the opening of Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport yesterday

Cathay Pacific link may open China to BA

Keith Harper and Alex Brummer

BRITISH Airways and Cathay Pacific — the ailing Hong Kong carrier — are moving towards an alliance which would improve significantly BA's position in Asia by taking it into the growing market of China.

BA acknowledged yesterday that talks between the airlines have been held in London and Hong Kong yesterday. A deal could be signed later this year.

The jewel in the crown of any alliance for BA would be the China market. Cathay, which is part of the Hong Kong-based Swire trading house, secured access to China's markets when it sold a 25 per cent stake to Citic Pacific, the holding company for private-sector investments by China.

The carrier serves 45 destinations worldwide, many of which are in the Asia-Pa-

cific region. Its new hub is the Chek Lap Kok airport in Hong Kong, the largest and most technologically advanced in the world, which opened this week.

Like other large carriers, Cathay has been feeling the draught of the Asian recession. It no longer flies direct to Seoul, capital of South Korea, which can be reached only on BA's flights via Japan.

A deal with BA would help to resolve some of Cathay's difficulties. It has been affected badly by Hong Kong's plunge into recession, which has been aggravated by the financial crisis sweeping across the region.

The severe difficulties in the region coincided with the handover of Hong Kong to China last year, a move which has led to decline in tourist interest.

Cathay is suffering from one of the worst periods in its 52-year history. Leading investment houses are cutting their year-end profit

The Big Four Alliances

BA, American, Qantas, Japan Airlines, Canadian Airlines, US Airways, Lot Polish Airlines, Finnair — plus Cathay Pacific?

Star Alliance, which includes United, Lufthansa, SAS, Thai, Singapore, Air Canada, Virgin, South African Airways, Northwest, Alaska, Air West, Spirit, Frontier, Hawaiian.

forecasts by as much as 30 per cent, but these may turn out to be too conservative because the airline's net profits halved last year to about £135 million.

The company has been involved in a series of crisis meetings with staff, and there has been a 15 per cent reduction in its labour force worldwide. Willy Roelofs, its sales general manager, said: "Everyone should be aware that we face enormous problems."

BA executives said yesterday that they were interested in a deal with Cathay because it would open up



markets in China from which it has been excluded until now.

The Chinese are committed to expanding airport facilities and have said they want to build 25 new airports over the next decade in cities with populations of more than one million. The Cathay axis could give BA direct access to at least six Chinese destinations.

Senior BA managers accept that the decline in business to Korea, Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong and other Asian routes will continue and is bound to be reflected in its profits.

Sterling band of 100 bosses attacks CBI's role as champion of monetary union

Industry's euro foes declare war

David Gow
Industrial Editor

THE captains of British business will engage in open warfare today over the European single currency, with 100 claiming it would wreak havoc and the CBI reaffirming its support for UK membership.

Lord Marsh, chairman of Business for Sterling, the anti-euro campaign backed by the 100 chairmen and chief executives, and claiming to represent the bulk of industry, is to launch a counter-attack on the CBI director-general, Adair Turner. He has dismissed his arguments as "simplistic and one-sided", and "ill-informed scare stories".

The CBI in turn flails the anti-euro camp by insisting that the majority of

Euro camp



Neil Fitzgerald, Unilever



Chris Mackinnon, Northern Foods



Lord (David) Sainsbury, Sainsbury



Clive Thompson, Balfour Beatty

Anti camp



Lord (John) Sainsbury, Sainsbury



Sir Anthony Bamford, JCB



Sir Stanley Kalms, Dixons



Lord Marsh, Ex-CBI and British Rail

businesses believe the currency's potential benefits outweigh the risks, and Britain should join when the economic conditions are right. The British Chambers of Commerce backs the CBI.

Taking up the "bare-knuckle fight", Lord Marsh, former Labour cabinet minister and British Rail chairman, and his group have backed a report from the European Research group, an alliance of centre-right MPs

from 24 countries, which claims that joining the euro would undermine British prosperity and competitiveness.

It is to be launched at a London conference later today attended by Tory deputy leader Peter Lilley and senior from-bench colleagues.

The report, endorsed by leaders such as Sir Anthony Bamford, Blairite head of JCB, and Gary Weston of Associated British Foods, argues

that the single currency would drive up British taxes to continental levels and substantially increase business borrowing costs because of the "profligacy" of other European governments.

The report warns: "EMU would mean monetary policy tailored to suit European rather than British needs."

"It would drive up business borrowing costs. It would drag Britain into Europe's pensions crisis. It would

threaten the pre-eminence of the City. And it would almost certainly mean higher corporate taxation. This is a battle in which all British businesses have a stake."

Lord Marsh will say that Mr Turner's attack on his multi-million-pound campaign is regrettable when entry to the euro is "the most important economic decision the nation will have to make for very many years."

"Seeking to turn the issue into a squabble about exactly how many businesses are in either camp misses the point entirely. No one can deny that there are potential risks. We need to ensure these risks are not ignored, and only ask for a serious and open debate."

In its riposte, the CBI says it has never suggested all businesses support British entry and admits a significant minority of its members do not, while among supporters

there is a wide range of opinion about when and under what conditions Britain should join.

Citing two surveys of business opinion which it undertook in 1996 and last year showing majority support, it accuses Lord Marsh's group of making "unjustified and fruitless" assertions.

Last week Mr Turner said the euro would stimulate competition and productivity growth across Europe by creating transparent prices, reduced exchange-rate risk and a pan-European capital market.

He accepted, however, that important risks included a one-size-fits-all interest rate — a point reiterated yesterday by Willem Buiter, a member of the Bank of England's rate-setting monetary policy committee, in an interview with Bloomberg News.

News in brief

June gloom hits retailers

BUSINESS in Britain's shops slowed last month as higher interest rates, a gloomier economic outlook and poor weather kept consumers at home, said the Confederation of British Industry.

Trade in June was below average, with footwear and leather, hardware, china and DIY outlets reporting the largest downturn.

Overall, 45 per cent of the 15,000 respondents said business was better than a year ago; 26 per cent said it was worse. The gap between the two — 19 percentage points — compared to 25 points in May. — *Larry Elliott*

BT reduces mobile tariff

BRITISH Telecom is to cut the cost of calling Vodafone and Cellnet mobile phones as a result of pressure from industry regulator Ofcom. From August 1, the cost of calling a Vodafone or Cellnet mobile will fall from 30p to 20p in the day, from 22p to 10p in the evening and from 10.5p to 10p at weekends.

The cost of BT Chargecard calls will also fall to 10p during the day, 35p in the evening and 20p at weekends; but payphone tariffs will rise.

The cuts bring fixed to mobile prices into line with those levied by One2One and Orange. — *Chris Barrie*

Stores 'didn't exploit BSE'

FARMERS' claims that supermarkets made excessive profits from beef in the wake of the BSE crisis have been dismissed by consultants London Economics. In its report, commissioned by Tesco, it said that even the big chains made a loss because with price increases falling to cover extra costs of measures through the supply chain to prevent human exposure to BSE variant strains.

But the supermarkets had offset the decline in beef sales by switching to other foods, while other sectors could not, and had been badly hit by the export ban. — *James Meikle*

EU pushes for unified taxes

A FRESH push in the European Union to harmonise tax systems was under way as the Commission announced accelerated plans to pursue tax evaders across the EU. Austria said it would use its EU presidency to promote plans for bringing national taxes further into line.

The plans are likely to ring alarm bells in Britain, where taxes would have to rise. — *Stephen Bates in Brussels*

Airbus wins £2.3bn order

AIRBUS, the European plane-making consortium, has pulled off a coup against its American rival, Boeing, with a £2.3 billion order from a US Airways for up to 30 wide-bodied planes. US Airways placed a firm order for seven A330s, with a provision for seven more and options on 16. — *Nicholas Bannister*



Core strategies

Bulmer
Running high-profile Strongbow advertising campaign featuring Johnny Vaughan.
Relocating Inch's operation to Herefordshire.
Repackaging White Lightning and Woodpecker brands.
Relocating management in Australia and New Zealand.
Investing in new orchards in Devon, Wales, Eastern Europe and Australia.

Merrydown
Launching Merrydown Vintage cider.
Reducing extensive brand range to concentrate on Shloer and Merrydown.
Forming strategic alliances with privately-owned distributor SHS and Shepherd Neame.
Dropping Two Dogs distribution deal.

Matthew Clark
Running TV and cinema advertising for the repackaged Diamond White.
Launching a smoothflow version of Dry Blackthorn — Blackthorn Gold.

Profits slump leaves bitter taste for cider makers

Cheap imports and hard competition leave traditional industry struggling to keep drinkers happy, says Ian King

TWO of Britain's three largest cider producers, HP Bulmer and Merrydown, showed the scars yesterday from their battle to retain the affection of Britain's drinkers.

They both announced disappointing results, with market leader Bulmer unveiling a 26 per cent drop in profits to £22.1 million, while Merrydown plunged into the red to the tune of £400,000.

Britain's third leading cider producer, Matthew Clark — which owns Taunton Cider and Gaymers — is expected to report disappointing figures on Monday, following a profits

warning last December. The dismal results follow several years in which the cider industry has come under intense competition, firstly from alcopops such as Hooper's Hoosh then from the "nitro-keg" ales, Caffrey's and Kilkenny.

At the same time, fierce competition between individual cider brands has seen Merrydown — which is dwarfed by the other two — struggle to compete on the marketing front.

The cider industry was also wounded by the former chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, who, in a move to dampen the enthusiasm for alcopops among underage drinkers, put a higher duty

on strong alcoholic drinks — hitting the premium-strength ciders.

Announcing the results, Bulmer — whose brands include Strongbow, White Lightning, Scrumpy Jack and Woodpecker — admitted that it was suffering from large cross-channel imports of cheap foreign beer. In their efforts to raise sales, promotional costs had exceeded their budget, the company said.

Chief executive Mike Hughes said Scrumpy Jack and Woodpecker had recently enjoyed increased sales volumes, however, while Strongbow had overtaken beer and lager brands such as Boddingtons, Castlemeane XXXX and McKean's in popularity.

Esmond Bulmer, the group's chairman, said: "It is worth remembering that cider sales in the UK have

still grown steadily over the last 50 years, checked on two occasions by increases in tax."

The results came a day after Bulmer announced plans to close the Inch's cider plant, at Winkleigh, north Devon, with the loss of nearly 50 jobs. Bulmer had paid £23.3 million for the business two years ago. John Burnett, the area's Liberal Democrat MP, accused Bulmer of wrecking one of Devon's best-known industries.

Merrydown, which earlier this year tried and failed to find a buyer, said its business was now rationalised to focus on the Merrydown and Shloer brands, believing that better times lie ahead. Chairman Andy Nash admitted, however: "Given recent history, it would be unrealistic to expect a turnaround in sales."



Lorry (top) leaves Inch's traditional cider-making plant, which boasts an impressive logo of a thirsty drinker. Bulmer is to close the factory at Winkleigh, Devon. PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL SLATER

Utility chiefs told how to escape top-pay flak

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

UTILITY company chiefs must harmonise performance standards and impose more demanding targets to escape criticism over remuneration packages, says a report published today.

The warning comes amid growing controversy over the latest pay and bonus figures for utility company executives whose rewards are be-

lieved to have angered the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.

The report by Meis, the remuneration consultancy, says the companies should adopt more easily comparable performance targets.

It adds that, in some cases, the performance criteria used to support potentially lucrative option and long-term incentive schemes are "insufficiently challenging".

Meis adds that the share price performance of most

companies in the sector has exceeded that of the FTSE 100, but this largely reflects external factors rather than the quality of corporate managers.

This is a crucial factor underpinning boardroom remuneration because share options and long-term incentive awards are frequently predicated on the performance of the share price against that of a comparative group.

Executives and remuneration committees also cite rising share prices to support salary rises.

Gains of 40 per cent for the electricity sector were recorded last year with water up 37 per cent and gas 62 per cent, although from a low base and mainly reflecting the demerger between BG and Centrica.

David Brooks, the report's author, says: "Whilst it is true that profitability amongst the generators has been good, the rise in share prices for British Energy, National Grid, Scottish Power and Scottish Hydro, all of which have been in excess of 45 per cent, owe much to persistent attention shown by foreign predators."

The Meis survey, largely based on annual reports for the year to March 1997, says the average rise in total remuneration for the utility companies' highest paid directors was 20 per cent.

All except BG and United Utilities gave executives cash bonuses, ranging from the £16,000 awarded at Powergen to the £226,000 at BTF.

Turnaround at Vauxhall brings 1,000 new jobs

Nicholas Bannister, Chief Business Correspondent

VAUXHALL'S Ellesmere Port plant in Cheshire, threatened with closure only a few months ago, is to be expanded through the creation of 1,000 full-time jobs.

The car group is adding a third shift at the plant with the aim of increasing output of its new Astra model from 120,000 to 180,000 a year.

The plant was effectively saved by a pay and productivity deal linked to the German mark and agreed by Vauxhall's British staff in April.

Prior to the deal, the car workers' unions feared that General Motors, Vauxhall's owner, would switch production to mainland Europe in a bid to cut costs by 30 per cent. Nick Reilly, Vauxhall's chairman and managing director, said that sales of the new Astra, launched in March, had exceeded the company's forecasts.

"The reception given to the new Astra, along with the introduction of other body styles, have given us the opportunity to increase capacity earlier than we could have hoped for," he said.

When the future of the Ellesmere Port and Luton plants was in doubt, Mr Reilly gave up his £150,000 basic annual salary to encourage the workers to back the new productivity deal.

Vauxhall has just invested

£300 million in Ellesmere Port and £150 million at its Luton plant, where the Vectra is made. The group has agreed that the Vectra replacement — due in several years' time — will also be made at the Luton plant, which employs about 5,000 people.

About 850 of the new jobs are needed for the third shift at Ellesmere Port, taking the plant's workforce to 5,200. Recruitment starts immediately for the new shift, which begins in October.

Margaret Beckett, the Trade and Industry Secretary, said that Vauxhall's decision was a massive vote of confidence in Merseyside and the United Kingdom as a centre for car production.

"Coming so soon after confirmation that Luton will build the replacement to the Vectra, it reinforces the commitment General Motors has to manufacturing in Britain."

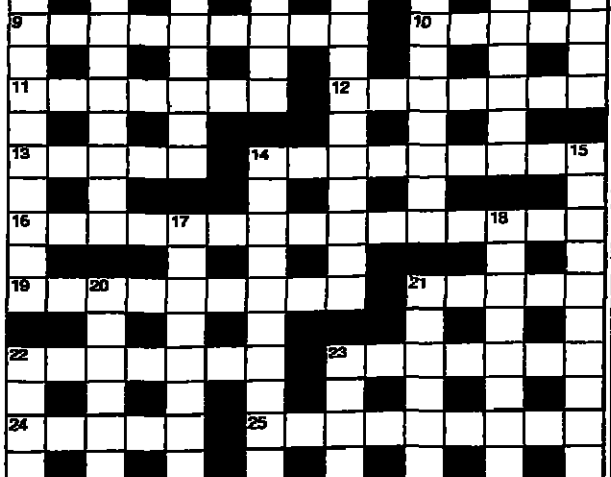
She said that the Vauxhall move and Ford's decision to build a new Jaguar model at Halewood demonstrated "the attractions Britain holds for global companies."

Tony Woodley, negotiator for the Transport and General Workers Union, said: "We were warning about a plant closure not long ago, so we warmly welcome the jobs."

Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union officer Doug Collins said: "Vauxhall has shown a commitment to working with unions and is delivering results."

Guardian Crossword No 21,317

Set by Gordius

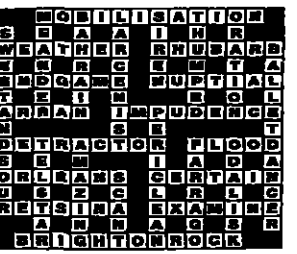


Across

- 1 Last of the lamb dinner swallowed when about to give similar response (5)
- 2 Reported collection of a multitude (5)
- 3 Eastern dignitary snatches model — it may help to promote a wedding (7)
- 4 One may drive horses to take drink (7)
- 5 A bit of Nelson on his column? — that's not far out (5)
- 6 They go in for 6, 8, and 10, but it's 25 they were (5)
- 7 Policy of one-man train operators? (4,3,3,5)
- 8 Do servile subordinates sustain the remnants of empire? (8)

Down

- 1 Charged for copy clipped by editor (10)
- 2 Holy roller who takes things easy? (8)
- 3 Paul, for instance, suffering from such a complaint (5)
- 4 Vehicle reportedly in decline (4)
- 5 Principal with slight variation to show the way (10)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,316

- 6 Dining after church could be bad form (8)
- 7 Offence given by article in former LBSR (6)
- 8 Military men in check (4)
- 14 Poetry links girl and boy in the tube (7,3)
- 15 Snaks could be dried with 21ac. (10)
- 17 Decorate books with gold title on the front (8)
- 18 Cautious round aimlessly for something to believe in? (8)
- 20 Anger on the road is an illusion (5)
- 21 It goes in any case after shrink gets started (5)
- 22 Spring is not every year (4)
- 23 Instrument's sound is dreadful (4)

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informative:

With effect from 3 July 1998 the following interest rates will apply:

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Credit Interest	Gross	Gross GAT	Net	Net GAT
	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
£1 to £2,499	4.25	4.25	4.40	4.45
£2,500 to £24,999	4.75	4.85	5.00	5.05
£25,000 and over	5.25	5.37	5.40	5.45

Direct Interest Savings Account				
Credit Interest	Gross	Gross GAT	Net	Net GAT
	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
£1 to £2,499	0.50	0.50	0.40	0.40
£2,500 to £24,999	4.75	4.85	5.00	5.05
£25,000 to £49,999	5.25	5.37	5.40	5.45
£50,000 and over	7.10	7.25	6.58	6.60

The rates are the rate payable where the interest is exempt from the tax applicable to interest on savings.

Gross: the rate before the deduction of tax applicable to interest on savings. Net: the rate after the deduction of tax on interest, currently 20%.

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© Published by Guardian Newspapers Limited
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER, and at
164 Deansgate, Manchester M60 2PR. Printed at
Westbury Press Ltd, 225 West Ferry Road,
London E14 6AP; Trafalgar Park Press, Ltd,
Leighton Road, Manchester M17 1LE.
47,217, Price, July 3, 1998. Registered as a
newspaper at the Post Office 1898/001-3077
A 5 P P 6 7



A rare image of FDR on which the sculpture will be based

Campaigners have won a battle to have an American hero's disability openly portrayed in a statue at his memorial, writes **Martin Kettle** in Washington



David Capozzi, a US official for the disabled, surveys the recently opened FDR memorial in Washington, which shows the former president seated

PHOTOGRAPH: DAYNA SMITH

Roosevelt's wheelchair comes out of the closet

A CAMPAIGN by disability pressure groups has forced authorities in Washington to add a lifesize sculpture of a wheelchair-bound President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the recently opened FDR memorial in the United States capital. When the memorial was first opened to the public in May 1997 disability campaigners complained that there was no sculpture showing that Roosevelt, who contracted polio in 1921, spent his entire presidency from 1933 until his death in 1945 in a wheelchair. Instead, the statue of Roose-

velt at the centre of the new memorial only showed him seated, wearing a cape, with his dog Fala by his side. The award-winning memorial has become the most frequently visited tourist site in Washington, overtaking the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the White House. Announcing the change of heart yesterday, Vice-President Al Gore said the new statue would be by the sculptor Robert Graham. It will be placed at the entrance to the memorial, an open-air, walk-through commemoration of the phases of Roosevelt's presidency on the banks of the Po-

tomac tidal basin in the centre of Washington. "This agreement will serve both as a tribute to a true American hero who led our nation through its darkest days and reminds us that disability is not a barrier to achievement," Mr Gore said. Throughout his legendary presidency, which saw the US battle its way out of the Great Depression and ended just after the second world war victory, Roosevelt went to extreme lengths to ensure the public was not reminded of his disability. An athletic man before polio struck, he liked to be photographed

swimming, and even developed a technique of supporting himself in the presence of photographers so he appeared to be walking. Some surviving members of the Roosevelt family initially opposed the wheelchair statue, saying it would be disloyal to FDR's insistence that he never appear in public in a wheelchair. David Roosevelt, his grandson, said then: "I'm just not sure that a memorial like this should be used to make a social statement." But other family members supported the proposal, as did President Bill Clinton. Another grandson, Christopher

Roosevelt, said recently: "The reality is that he spent every single day of his life in the White House utilising a wheelchair, and when he did appear before groups of individuals that had faced adversity, he used his disability to inspire them." Only two private photographs exist of Roosevelt in his wheelchair. One at his home at Hyde Park, showing him with his dog and the daughter of the estate caretaker, will form a basis for Mr Graham's sculpture. "We're very pleased. We're anxious to get it there," said Jim Dickson, the community

affairs director of the National Organisation on Disability, which led the campaign. "We need this statue to tell all the children with disabilities and all their parents that anything is possible." Although the wheelchair issue is the most controversial, historians have pointed out that the memorial presents the Roosevelts in poses more compatible with 1990s sensibilities than those of their own time. There is no suggestion Roosevelt was a heavy cigarette smoker, and the statue of his wife Eleanor shows her without her trademark fur stole.

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